

THOMAS THISTLEWOOD AND WOMEN SLAVES

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ABSTRACT

The diary of Thomas Thistlewood, 1750 to 1786, provides us with a case study in which to assess the nature of eighteenth century Jamaica. The level of interaction that Thistlewood has with the slave community means that we are able to build up a picture not only of white, but also slave society. The diary shows that a continuum existed between the white and slave communities. Slave women were important to the process of intermingling. They bridged the gap between the two communities in three important ways. These were through engaging in long term sexual liaisons with white men, bearing mulatto children, and becoming the commercial intermediaries between the two communities. These roles meant that slave women filtered information, culture, and money back and forth between the two communities.

Gender was an important determinant in the experience of a slave, Slave women were subject not only to exhaustive work routines and punishment, but also to sexual exploitation and the extra burden of reproduction. Gender also played a role in the opportunities a slave had to escape from the field. Field slaves were assigned work in a largely genderless way, however, positions of authority, such as driver, were reserved for male slaves. Slave occupations away from the field were also gender biased, with women working in the house and as marketers, and men pursuing the trades. This bias was based on white gender assumptions, and effectively limited the ability of women to escape from the field. The sexual exploitation of slave women was common in Jamaica. While most women gained nothing from sexual liaisons with white men, a small number were able to turn their exploitation to their advantage, and gain an improved lifestyle and position.

Slave women played an important role within the slave community. As bearers of tradition they had an important role in the preservation and retention of a separate slave culture with African influences. Slave women were the primary care givers

to children, however, Thistlewood's diary suggests that slave men were also important in the upbringing of the children.

The experiences of Thistlewood and those he mentions in his diary give us an ideal place to centre wider debates concerning the nature of slave and master interaction, and the role and position slave women played.

INTRODUCTION

In the following thesis I wish to use Thomas Thistlewood's diary to pursue three hypotheses about the nature of slave women and their role and place within Jamaican society. Thomas Thistlewood gives us a unique glimpse into eighteenth century Jamaican society, through his diary, which recreates thirty seven years of his life, 1750 to 1786. The daily activities of Thistlewood and the people with whom he had contact present a picture of two distinct communities, slave and free, but with a continuum between the two provided by the mulattoes, those of mixed race. Slave women, as mothers of mulattoes, were important to this intermingling of the two communities. Thistlewood played an important role in the life of slave women, but it was not a one way street; slave women played an important role in the life of Thomas Thistlewood. He interacted with slave women on three levels, as the master of workers, as a predator ready to take advantage sexually of any woman, and as a companion and partner to a small number of women. The mutual relationships that existed between Thistlewood and some of the women bridged the gulf between the two cultures. The details in the diary provide an insight into both the white and slave communities, making the diary a valid tool for historical research.

My first hypothesis is that while Thistlewood, and other slave owners, kept women slaves primarily for their economic productive function, that it was through their sexual function that slave women were able to gain some form of bargaining power to use in their relationship with their master. My second hypothesis is that through the strong relationships that developed between some slave women and their masters slave women were able to gain entry into the wider Creole community in a way that was not available to male slaves. My third hypothesis is that within the slave community, although there were ways that women could gain status, a double domination existed for them, as they were also subject to control by slave men.

In assessing these hypotheses I will break my research into four areas, the broader picture of eighteenth century Jamaican society, slave women's productive function, slave women's reproductive and sexual function, and slave women's role within the slave community and culture. Chapter Two will set the scene for this thesis by assessing the nature of Jamaican society in the eighteenth century. It will do this by establishing the subgroups within the greater society and assessing how they interacted with one another. In doing this we will see how slave women fit into the wider picture of Jamaican society. Chapter three deals specifically with the productive aspects of the slave women's life. In doing this it looks at not only the aspects of production that were controlled by the masters, but also at those over which the slaves themselves had control, namely the provision ground and marketing system. Chapter four deals with the sexual and reproductive function of slave women. It was in this area of slave life that men and women's experiences differed the most sharply. This chapter will assess the impact sexual exploitation had on slave women, and the ways that women had, to turn their exploitation to their advantage. This chapter will also look at the reproductive function of slave women and assess the impact the reproductive cycle had on slave women. Chapter five deals specifically to the life of women within the slave community. In doing this it addresses both the role of women within the family, and the contribution women made to the culture that existed within the slave community.

I will begin this study by identifying trends in historical research into the role and position of slave women within eighteenth century West Indian society. The slave community has often been treated as a monolithic group in historical research. However, there were many divisions within the wider slave community. One important division was that based on gender. While there were many similarities in the slave experience for women and men, the sexual function of slave women provided them with a different role and position both

within the slave community and in relationship to the white community. White men viewed slave women as objects for sexual gratification thus adding another area of slaves' lives where the white male could assert his dominance over them. Sexual relations, however, allowed women a way of gaining benefits that were limited to males. The women who were able to gain these advantages are important in the study of Jamaican society as they provide a window into the nature of the intimate relations that existed between the races. The other aspect of a woman's sexuality, that was not unrecognised by white men, was their ability to be not only producers of wealth, but reproducers of future workers.

There has also been a tendency for historians to interpret slave women's sexual relations with white men as a greater compliance by women to the slave system. For example, Peter Wilson in his 1974 book Crab Antics states

From early on black women were treated differently from black men and were more readily and firmly attached to the alien society of whites . . . To black women concubinage offered the opportunity to improve their social standing.¹

This attitude has led to the minimisation of women's contribution to resistance, or to the preservation of African culture.² There is truth in saying that a woman had much to gain from liaisons with white men, such as possible manumission for herself, or her children, but this does not necessarily mean that they were more "readily and firmly attached" to the white system. It may mean that slave women were prepared when the opportunity arose to use white male desires to their own advantage. The women with whom Thistlewood and his friends entered into long term liaisons enjoyed the benefits, and sometimes suffered the consequences, that their associations offered but they remained connected to the slave community through familial and friendship links. This meant the women did

¹ Wilson. PJ Crab Antics: The Social Anthropology of English Speaking Negro Societies of the Caribbean. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1973. p.193

² Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. Heinemann Publishers and Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1990 p.1

not distance themselves from the slave community, and frequently worked on the slaves' behalf to influence the white men to improve their conditions. Phibbah, Thistlewood's 'wife' often stepped in to improve the lot of her fellow slave by begging reprieve from punishment or giving out extra rations.

Reprimanded Phib for sending Sally etc dinner every day.

She is now so used to it, that she depends more upon Phib dinner than any thing she provides for herself - Sally take care to send to see what we have got & dinner is sent her carved up secretly³

Women who became the mistresses to white men were the most important mediators between the slave and free communities. Their sympathy still belonged to the slave community, so they still fully participated in its community and cultural life, while at the same time their close association with the white men made them able to incorporate the trappings of white culture into their daily existence to a greater degree than any other group of slaves. They often dressed in a European manner and had a better command of English than other slaves⁴, and these two facts made European culture more accessible to them. The bridge these women forged between the cultures was further strengthened by their bearing mulatto babies who provided a tangible link between the two cultures.

There has also been much historical debate concerning how slave community and culture was constructed. The role of women and the power they held within their own community has provided material for this debate. Contrary to the belief that the slave family was largely a misnomer, and that families consisted of only a mother and children, it is possible that not only were slaves involved in a complex set of kinship networks, but also that women and men entered into partnerships that often lasted many years. Women were largely responsible, however, for child

³ Thistlewood. T The Diary of Thomas Thistlewood. Monson MSS 31/1-37
Lincolnshire Archives Monson 31/31 Saturday 25th March 1780 p.48

⁴ Barash. C "The Character of Difference: The Creole Woman as Cultural Mediator in Narratives about Jamaica." Eighteenth Century Studies. 23. 1990. pp.407-23. p.413

rearing and domestic duties. This again provides a different set of circumstances for women from those of male slaves. Women held an important cultural position within the slave community as bearers of African culture to the next generation. The passing on of the African culture enabled the whole community to keep a separate cultural identity, to act as a counter-influence to the dominant white culture. This separate identity enabled slaves not only to have a degree of self worth, but also the power to resist the advances made on their time and behaviour by the white community.

The movement in historical research towards demographic and other statistical based history⁵ has done much to illuminate the life of women slaves. Statistics on their own, however, leave a rather narrow view of the slave women's existence as they tend to concentrate on the reproductive aspects of women's lives. In doing this, not only are other aspects of women's lives minimised, but the individual is lost within the collective group of slave women. Therefore, to create a balanced appraisal of slave women's lives, we must look beyond the statistics and find other sources that will complement them. The slaves themselves did not leave the historian with many clues about their community and culture, so we have to look for white accounts of their lives. Therefore, diaries by those whites who had intimate contact with slaves become a valuable source. To use the diary of Thomas Thistlewood as a way of gaining knowledge about slave women and their relations with the white and slave community, has many advantages. It allows the historian to look at a case study of slaves and follow their activities over a number of years. As a long established resident of Jamaica, Thistlewood was able to recognise behaviour and note events as one who had an intimate knowledge of them, making the diary more reliable than observations written by a traveller passing through.

⁵ For Example Higman. B W Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807 -1834. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1984.

While the diary may have many useful insights and provide us with the opportunity to look at a case study of a group of slaves in detail, it does, however, pose certain problems. We must always be aware of "the gaps between the actual behaviour, the informant description of such behaviour, and the historical records themselves."⁶ In the case of the diary, we must always be aware that the voice of the slave is missing and the events are merely the interpretation of them by a third party. Another problem with the diary is that the reader is bound by the selectivity of the writer, not only as to which events are recorded, but how much information there is for any one event. Thistlewood's interests in his slaves was primarily in their productive lives. He was not especially interested in the activities of his female slaves outside their direct contribution to the profit margin, particularly after his settling in period. Thistlewood's diary often creates a desire to know more than he has recorded, with many events only partially recorded or not followed up upon, leaving the reader with a sense of only seeing half the picture.

The handwriting and eighteenth century language can also pose a problem to the twentieth century reader. Poor penmanship, damage to the paper and script, combined with non existent grammar or punctuation mean that the reader is often left guessing as to the exact nature of the sentence. The use of eighteenth century language and some Creole adaptations also hamper easy reading. In addition, Thistlewood also frequently used abbreviations and incomplete words not only of the time, but also of Thistlewood's own invention, thus increasing the difficulty of understanding. Familiarity with the text and an understanding of the idiosyncracies of language and writing style, such as recording all sexual activities in Pig Latin, lead to a greater level of understanding.

⁶ Mintz. S "History and Anthropology: A Brief Reprise." Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies. Genovese. E & Engerman. S (ed) New York. 1975. pp.477-494 p.493

Thistlewood's diary is particularly interesting because he was not a member of the elite, but was a man from the middle classes who worked his way from being an overseer, to that of master of his own property, both land and slaves. The position Thistlewood held in Jamaican society meant that, while he had substantial contact with the white community, in his day to day life he was surrounded by a Negro workforce to a greater extent than the elite in Jamaica probably ever was. This means that while his diary is a rich source for the structure and function of the white community in Jamaica, the manner of his life meant that he had greater access to knowledge about the slave community than did a large landowner who had little direct contact with slaves. Men from Thistlewood's rank of white society were more likely, than large landowners such as John Cope, to take a de facto slave wife which further increased their contact and knowledge of the slave community and culture. This is the case with Thistlewood, who through his association with Phibbah would have had access to information that without her knowledge or contacts, would have been difficult for Thistlewood to gain.⁷

The reliability of the diary is hard to assess, as there are few cross reference points to other known sources.⁸ There are two factors, however, that allow us to have some faith in Thistlewood's version of events. The first is the uncritical nature of the diary. Rarely does Thistlewood analyse events or people, but simply records things as they happen.⁹ The second is the mundane nature of much of the information which suggests that the diary was written purely for his own benefit as an aid to memory, and not with publication in mind at the time of

⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/19 Saturday 1 October 1768 p.170 An incident when Thistlewood learns the meaning of some embroidery on the smock of Phibbah's daughter Coobah.

⁸ One cross reference point is William Cornish who Thistlewood met when he first arrived in Jamaica and noted was 81 years of age. There is an entry in the St Andrews Parish register of his death in 1761 at age 91.

⁹ Ward. JR "The Planter and his Slaves in Eighteenth Century Jamaica." The Search for Wealth and Stability. Smout. TC (ed). London. 1979 pp.1-20 p.2

writing.¹⁰ These two factors, combined, give us little reason to think that Thistlewood was writing with a hidden agenda to thrust upon his readers. In addition, Thistlewood is remarkably frank about matters, such as sexual activity, that other diarists have seldom been frank about. Therefore, we may assume that there is a reasonable degree of reliability in his reporting of events.¹¹

Thistlewood never provided a rationale for the institution of slavery, nor did he openly condemn or accept it in the diary. There was tacit acceptance, however, to the extent that he bought himself slaves. Only once in a round about way does he question the rightness of slavery in reference to Phibbah

Quashe says she is Sick for which I am really very Sorry!
Poor girl, I pity her, She is Miserable Slavery.¹²

Not being a man of great reflection Thistlewood probably found little need to question the system. A pragmatist, Thistlewood would have accepted that slave labour, already entrenched when he arrived in Jamaica, was the most effective way of creating profit, and, as that was his principal goal in moving to Jamaica, he accepted it willingly. Despite this acceptance of the system Thistlewood seems not to have been excessively racist in his ideology or action. Thistlewood rarely used animalistic imagery in his diary to describe his slaves appearance or behaviour. He also displays some faith in his slaves ability to conduct themselves in a responsible and independent manner by allowing them to work at the Penn for several months without constant white supervision prior to Thistlewood taking up residence in September 1767. This does not mean he operated a "soft form" of slavery. On the contrary, at times he was very brutal. Nevertheless, he rarely makes the statements about the racial inferiority of the African that confirmed racists, such as Edward Long, the eighteenth century Jamaican historian, commonly made.¹³

¹⁰ Hall. D In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86.
London. 1989. p.xvii

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/8. Sunday 17 July 1757 p.112

¹³ For example see Long. E History of Jamaica. London. 1776. Vol 2 p.364

The diary is an important source about the relationship between slave women and white men. Thistlewood had a voracious sexual appetite and preyed on many women in his charge for sexual services, for which he paid them either in money, kind or reprieve from punishment. He was meticulous in recording his sexual encounters with slave women, recording the place, position, and, at the beginning, tribe of the woman "as if he was a gentleman cruising Drury Lane, instead of an overseer coupling in a still house or cane interval."¹⁴ Thistlewood's diary, therefore, provides great testimony to the fact that slave women were sexually exploited in large numbers by white men. The payment, or relief from work or punishment, most women received for their services would have been small consolation for the indignity they suffered. Some of these women, nevertheless, were able to gain some advantage for themselves from the white men's predatory nature. By regularly making themselves available, not only to Thistlewood but other white men, they were able to increase their wealth and so improve their lifestyle.

Over and above these casual encounters Thistlewood developed lasting relationships with three women; Marina, Jenny, and, most importantly, Phibbah. These women, especially Phibbah, were important influences on Thistlewood in his dealings with the rest of the slave community. While in many ways Thistlewood can be seen as emotionally self sufficient, he was very hurt when he was without a steady female companion. Even when he was very sick he still appeared to crave for their company.¹⁵ The women could sense this and used it to their advantage to manipulate Thistlewood. Phibbah and Jenny often withdrew their services from him if he had aggrieved them in some way. This

¹⁴ Mullin. M "Women and the Comparative Study of American Negro Slavery." Slavery and Abolition. 6, May 1985, pp.25-40. p.32

¹⁵ Mullin. M Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean 1736-1831. University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1992. p.84

would then force Thistlewood to rethink his position. This type of relationship was not unique, and other members of Thistlewood's circle had established similar arrangements with slave women. For example, William Crookshanks, another of John Cope's employees, had a relationship with Myrtilla a slave woman for whom he was prepared to go to great lengths to protect and please.¹⁶ The extent to which these relationships were based on mutual affection or manipulative opportunism is an area open to debate. It is clear, however, that both the slave women and the white men had much to gain from these relationships, and many lasted for many years. These relationships gave both parties an extended network of friends within the converse community. Thistlewood was able to mix socially with the other slave women who were Phibbah's friends and family, while Phibbah mixed, in a limited way, with the white male friends of Thistlewood. For example Phibbah was friends with one of Thistlewood's close associates, Mr Hayward, and when he was leaving to return to England he made a trip of the Penn to farewell Phibbah

Mr Hayward did not stay, returned about 10 min: past 7 he bid Phib: goodbye, as he did not think he should come again before he departed.¹⁷

These types of relationships therefore, blurred the definite edges of the two communities.

The diary does not provide a detailed description of the slave community but, from the remarks Thistlewood made it is possible to build a picture of life for slaves. There is much space taken in the diary describing the production the slaves were involved in and, from this, we can establish work patterns and time available for the slaves to complete domestic tasks or enter into economic activities on their own behalf. It also means there are detailed records of the slaves' health, as illness directly affected production. It also records visitors to and from the Penn and from this we can see that there were many slave contacts between the neighbouring plantations, suggesting

¹⁶ For example Thistlewood. T Monson 31/7 Thursday 24 February 1756 p.31

¹⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/32 Wednesday 30 May 1781 p.70

that there was an active network of familial and friendship connections throughout the area. The diary also provides some insights into the construction of the community, in that it records births, deaths, and "matches" in the slave community, as well as listing households when issuing items such as cooking pots to his own slaves, or reallocating housing. These entries though fragmented, give a description of slave society.

While being a record of the mundane, the diary makes it possible to trace the path of an individual, and his slaves and associates over thirty seven years. Thistlewood's diary, therefore, demonstrates how a white man could not only accumulate wealth and social standing, but metamorphose from an Englishman into a Creole and in the process adjust his attitudes and behaviour. When Thistlewood arrived in Jamaica in 1750 he had little more than letters of introduction, and a scant knowledge of the place to which he had come. By his death in 1786 he was the owner of his own property, Breadnutt Island Penn, and thirty five slaves, as well as having risen from a person of little social standing to someone respected and accepted by most ranks of Jamaican society¹⁸. The process by which this occurred was gradual, but it is possible to see four phases that Thistlewood goes through during which his behaviour modified and his attitudes altered to become a successful Creole.

The first phase begins with Thistlewood's arrival in Jamaica on 24 April 1750 and ends on 8 July 1751 when Thistlewood left Vineyard Penn to become overseer at the Egypt Estate. During the first eighteen months Thistlewood spent in Jamaica he was largely immersed in the new sensations of slavery and the Jamaican way of life. This meant that he was not only introduced to black society, but also to the white Creole culture, and commented on many activities within both groups that he would later find commonplace. On going to a neighbours for dinner he notes

¹⁸ This can be seen in Thistlewood's appointment to the position of Justice of the Peace, on Friday 20 October 1775.

At dinner to day, every Body took hold of y^e: Table Cloth, held it up, threw off y^e: Crumbs and an Empty Plate, Jamaica fashion.¹⁹

These types of comments provide valuable insights into the workings and habits of both communities. The fact that Thistlewood did not continue this practise means that we lose the added insights that a seasoned insider could provide about the customs and practices of Jamaican society.

The first position that Thistlewood accepted was as overseer at Vineyard Penn. He began his tenure there on Monday 2 July 1750. Thistlewood was soon immersed in the Jamaican slave system and found himself surviving on his own with few support networks. Between November 1750 and February 1751, he did not see a white person on more than three or four occasions. The lack of contact with white people allowed Thistlewood to learn something of the African culture, and by November 1750 he was able to recognise the tribal variations that existed amongst the slaves well enough to note

Att night had Creolian, Congo, and Coromantee etc musick & dancing . . .²⁰

While Thistlewood developed an understanding of the slaves who surrounded him he had not yet had time to formulate his own opinions and behaviour towards them, and his thoughts and actions appear to largely mirror those of the other whites around him. In May 1751 Thistlewood records

#Negroes have an ugly custom, one and all. off picking lice off their heads with their fingers, putting them in their mouths and eating them.

Monkeys have a parallel custom²¹

This type of entry is largely restricted to the first years of Thistlewood's life in Jamaica, and do not reflect his attitude in the following years when he developed his own attitudes and behaviours.

During his first two years, Thistlewood formed some patterns of behaviour that he kept for the rest of his life. He began to have

¹⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/1 Sunday 3 June 1750. p.307

²⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/1 Saturday 25 November 1750 p.531

²¹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/2 Thursday 20 May 1751 p.61

casual sexual relations with women under his care, and also began a steady relationship with a slave woman, Marina, on whom he showered gifts and attention.

Att night gave Marina, some sugar, 4 bottles off rum, some salt, and pepper pott, with 18 pints off corn made into fungi, to treat yl: Negroes and especially her shipmates withal at her housewarming . . . ²²

On finishing this phase of his life, he ensured that Marina was comfortable before moving on, but did not look back.

The second phase of progress begins with Thistlewood's arrival at Egypt Estate, and ends in 1758 with his return there after a brief interlude as overseer at Kendall Estate. It was during these years that Thistlewood was the most brutal in his regime, and during which he faced the greatest resistance to his regime from the slaves. Thistlewood used excesses of punishment against the slaves during this period, inventing cruel and unusual punishments to inflict upon them. These excesses peaked in 1755-1756 with incidents such as

Punch caught at Salt River and brought home. Flogged him and Quaccoo well, and then washed and rubbed in salt pickle, lime juice and bird pepper; also whipped hector for losing his hough, made New Nigroe Joe piss in his eyes & mouth etc²³

The slaves, far from taking Thistlewood's heavy handed ways without a fight, used many tactics of resistance against Thistlewood at this time. The most serious was an attempt on Thistlewood's life

. . . met Congo Sam Who has been run away Since the 2d: Instant: attempting to take him, he immediately Struck at me with a Back'd Bill he had in his hand., and repeated his chops with all vehemence driving me back into the Morass toward yl: River . . . I kept him off with my stick saying you Villain runaway away with you &c. he answer'd in the Negroe Manner I will kill you, I will kill you now . . . ²⁴

The reaction by Thistlewood to this event was to increase his vigilance and not modify his ways. The two parties constantly

²² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/2 Saturday 6 July 1751 p.144

²³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/7 Friday 30 July 1756 p.125

²⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/3 Wednesday 27 December 1752 pp.247-248

jockeyed for position, seeking to gain the upper hand in the negotiating process.

As Thistlewood had done at Vineyard, he took a steady sexual partner, while continuing casual sexual relations. However, unlike Marina, Jenny, Thistlewood's first partner at Egypt, was feisty and frequently discontented. The relationship they had almost mirrored the battle for power Thistlewood had with the rest of the slave community. Jenny was often impudent and they spent much of the time arguing, resulting in temporary separations. Thistlewood's doubts about their relationship are evident, and there is even one occasion when he feared for his life

To Night Jenny having hid a Two edged Bill under yl: Bed . . . to fright away the Night More as she says) but am affraid with other intent: had her put in yl: Bilboes in yl: Cookroom all Night, and took the cloathes I last bought, from her²⁵

Thistlewood finally became tired of the arguments and the demands that Jenny made on him, and by the middle of 1753 he had begun to see Phibbah on a regular basis, although he made sure he was established with Phibbah before ridding himself of Jenny's attentions. The two competing women resented each other's presence and argued with Thistlewood about the situation had a Quarrell with Phibbah, She being offended at my giving Jenny a little Sugar²⁶

By the end of this phase Phibbah was established as Thistlewood's steady sexual partner, but it was not an easy transition to domestic bliss together. They often argued and separated, not only over Thistlewood's behaviour, especially his treatment of other slaves and his philandering, but because Phibbah was pursued by John Cope. The position of Cope as Phibbah's owner meant that she was unwilling to, or was perhaps unable to, resist his advances, and as Thistlewood's employer, Thistlewood was in no position to stop him invading his territory.

²⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/4 Wednesday 28 (month unclear)
Ref 152

²⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/5 Friday 5 July 1754 p.154

At the same time as Thistlewood was stamping his presence on the slave community, so too he was beginning to carve a niche for himself in the white community. During the period 1752 to 1758, Thistlewood began to have a regular social life with men of similar rank, other overseers and attorneys as well as shopkeepers and sea captains. He also joined the militia and became a regular attender at the exercises. Then on the third of January 1756 he sealed his commitment to becoming a Creole and establishing a permanent life for himself in Jamaica

In the morning rode to hartford got there ab:t Seven
O'Clock: bought a New Negroe boy off a Mason . . . he is an
Ebo, about 16 years of age, Measures 4F:9-2/10 inches:
Named him Lincoln²⁷

This phase closed with Thistlewood leaving Egypt, after constant arguing with John Cope over wages and conditions and going to Kendall Estate in 1757 to be overseer. The return of Thistlewood to Egypt in 1758 marks the beginning of the third phase in Thistlewood's Creolisation process, a phase significant to the relationship he developed with Phibbah.

This was a period of consolidation. The excesses of the previous years had gone from Thistlewood's behaviour. He no longer devised cruel and unusual punishments, and, in return, the strong resistance that he had faced from the slaves also diminished. It would appear that the boundaries had been established between the two sides and a state of relative calm had descended upon relations between Thistlewood and the Egypt slaves. In 1760 Tackey's Rebellion affected the Westmoreland area, yet the Egypt slaves did not join the uprising, but helped Thistlewood protect the Estate against possible attack.

This time was also more settled for Thistlewood and Phibbah. Having weathered the time apart, Phibbah consolidated her position in Thistlewood's life, and Thistlewood, while still straying, was more attentive to her, and their relationship was closer than before to a marriage. Their relationship was cemented on 29 April 1760 when Phibbah bore them a son, John.

²⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/7 Saturday 3 January 1756 p.2

Thistlewood acknowledged paternity, the only occasion on which he did so. In 1762 had his son manumitted.

Thistlewood was making plans to establish himself on his own property and he began to accumulate slaves. By 1767 he was the owner of twenty eight men, women, and children. On July 3 1765 he purchased, with Mr Samuel Say, the Paradise Penn. They divided it in two and established separate titles, and Thistlewood took ownership of the Breadnutt Island Penn. He put his slaves to work there, building a house and other out buildings and clearing the land to make it suitable both for grazing and crops. When this job was well under way, Thistlewood left Egypt and took up residence at Breadnut Island Penn, for the first time master of his own affairs.

The moving to the Penn signals the beginning of the fourth phase of Thistlewood's Jamaica experience. There was still much work to be done to make the Penn a profitable success. Now that he was answerable to no direct authority, he could not only put his own ideas on planting and slave management into practise but reap the benefit of his, and the slaves, labours instead of working for somebody else.

Phibbah had moved with Thistlewood to the Penn, and their son, now freed, was attending school, further consolidating their relationship. The relationship with Phibbah, and the extra contact it gave Thistlewood with a number of slaves from her circle of friends and family, combined with a new maturity of attitude meant that Thistlewood had mellowed and his relationship with his slaves was a relatively good one with little open tension between them.

Thistlewood also consolidated his position within the white community by not only widening his circle of associates, but through participating in many communal and civic activities. Thistlewood regularly attended the court and sat upon the jury; he voted in the vestrymen elections, and received a promotion in the militia in 1769.

. . . went to Mr Stone's and from him a commission of the
21st Instant date /which he procured for me/ to be a Liet
of Sav la mar fort²⁸

These were all signs of Thistlewood's increasing status and respectability within the white community.

By the late seventies the Penn was turning a profit and Thistlewood's horticultural talents were well known on the island and he was frequently asked for advice and showed people his gardens. Thistlewood was constantly moving up the social ladder. His group of associates broadened to include not only men of property, but also for the first time white women. One of Thistlewood's closest associates of the late seventies and early eighties was Mrs Blake, a widow, with whom Thistlewood engaged in business and social activities. The increasing association with white women led to him increasingly participating in more genteel social events such as dances and plays

dined at Egypt, & staid till past 8 o'night. dr pinkney, mr Wilson, Mr cope & the ladies danced - company mr & mrs Cope, Miss Cope, dr & mrs pinkney, mr & mrs Leicester & miss Leicester, Mr Wilson & myself - At last I left Mr Wilson dancing and went home myself²⁹

This period was one of rises and falls. Thistlewood continued to make good profits until 1780 when successive hurricanes and flooding meant that, on his death Thistlewood was negotiating the purchase of a smaller property as it had become unprofitable to remain on the Penn. There were also personal sadnesses for Thistlewood during this period, with not only the deaths of some of his closest associates, but also that of his son John. The death of John caused Thistlewood much heartache. A week after his death in 1780 Thistlewood wrote:

I am exceeding dejected, & low spirited etc, a parched mouth & great inward burning³⁰

²⁸ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Sunday 31 December 1769 p.237

²⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/30 Thursday 27 January 1780 p.19

³⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/30 Wednesday 13 September 1780 p.148

Despite the trials of his final years, by Thistlewood's death in 1786, he was a success by his own standards: having arrived with virtually nothing he died the owner of land, 34 slaves, as well as livestock and other small assets. He had reached a position of respectability within the white community and reached a status he would not have been able to attain had he remained in Britain. His only regret may have been that due to the ill fortune of the later years and the early death of John he had no direct heir to pass his life's work on to as a going concern.

The way that Thistlewood's position changed in relation to both the white and slave communities affected his relationship with slave women. The balance between the levels of contact between Thistlewood and the women changed over time so that when he worked at Vineyard and Egypt their productive capacity and sexual availability were of equal importance to him. When he moved onto the Penn and was working on his own behalf, the productive capacity of the women was more important to Thistlewood than their sexual availability as their productive capacity was directly reflected in his own profitability. As he became more involved with Phibbah, the number of slave women with whom he associated socially grew, and so his understanding of slave community and culture deepened.

CHAPTER TWO

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY JAMAICAN SOCIETY

Jamaica was seized for the British from the Spanish in 1655, and for the first twenty years of British occupation there was a battle for its control between the buccaneers who used it as a base to plunder Spanish colonies and shipping, and the settlers who saw the large tracts of arable land as an opportunity to make a living.¹ This struggle, combined with natural disasters and endless French wars made Jamaica appear to be in a state of chronic disorder and earned it the reputation as a very lawless colony.² It was during this time, however, that the foundations for the future direction of Jamaica were being laid. Planters with money and ambition were staking out large tracts of land, beginning to import slaves, and build sugar works. The chaos, combined with a high percentage of settlers dying of tropical diseases meant that by 1760 forty four planters held over a thousand acres of land or more each, with sixteen holding over two thousand acres.³ This concentration of land ownership meant that there were few opportunities for small farmers. From the start the planters recognised that sugar production held the key to financial success, but the labour intensive nature of sugar production and the capital required to establish sugar works meant that it did not immediately become the dominant export. By the end of the seventeenth century, however, it had eclipsed everything else as the way to make a fortune in Jamaica.⁴ Unlike Barbados, or the American South, whose first response to the labour problem was indentured servants from Britain, Jamican landowners imported and used African slaves to work the fields from the start. At first, the supply of slaves was limited, but, in 1698, with the abolition of the monopoly on the slave trade by the Royal African Company, the flood gates opened and, between 1689 and 1713, the slave population almost

¹ Dunn. R S Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies. New York. 1972 p.152

² Dunn. R S Sugar and Slaves pp.149-152

³ Dunn. R S Sugar and Slaves p.156

⁴ Dunn. R S Sugar and Slaves p.169

doubled from 30 000 to 55 000,⁵ giving Jamaica a ratio of eight slaves to one white⁶, higher than any other British colony. The sugar monoculture which developed in Jamaica while it was lucrative for those large planters involved was fraught with problems. In particular, it was reliant on many outside pressures. It required British merchants to extend credit; a good price had to be gained for sugar; constant labour supply from slave traders was necessary; North American ships were required to supply both food and transport.⁷ The large planters made their profit and then retired to England leaving their estates to be run by overseers and attorneys, which often led to estates sliding as overseers cheated the landowner and neglected the crops. This history contrasts with the American South which was a settler society first and a slave society second. The large scale colonisation of the American South from Britain and Europe meant that there was a diversification among the whites, and this meant the planters were less exposed to external influences than their West Indian counterparts. The settler society nature of the South also meant that whites always outnumbered slaves, and were less dependent on their labour for the success of the colony as a whole. Absentee ownership so prevalent in the West Indies was relatively rare in the American South, and so planters were able to monitor their plantations in a much closer way than in the West Indies. By the mid eighteenth century when Thomas Thistlewood arrived in Jamaica slavery was well entrenched, sugar production was the principal export and money earner there, and Jamaica was considerably differentiated from slave societies to the North.

In order to establish a context for the life of Thomas Thistlewood and the experience of slave women, it is necessary to look at eighteenth century Jamaica as a whole and locate their respective positions within a greater Jamaican society which

⁵ Dunn. R S Sugar and Slaves p165

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Dunn. R S Sugar and Slaves p189

comprised both free and slave communities.⁸ Slave women existed both in the broad society of Jamaica that encompassed all races, and within the subset of that society called the slave community. Their positions within these two are inter-related, and both require examination in order to develop a context in which to place their experiences.

This chapter seeks to understand the nature of the separate communities within Jamaican society. It also attempts to see how these communities intersect and interact with one another. In doing this, it seeks to recognise slave women's role in white/black interaction and intersection. To further illuminate the status of slave women, this chapter seeks to establish the status of women of all colours within Jamaican society, and concludes with a brief look at the rival groups within the slave community.

At first glance eighteenth century Jamaican society appeared to be comprised of two separate groups, free white and slave black, existing side by side and never meeting except in the area of production when a domination/subordination dynamic existed. Closer examination, however shows that this was not the case. The two groups, while retaining their own culture, values and "membership," did intersect in certain situations, or within certain sections of the respective groups. As the eighteenth century progressed there was also a third group which comes into play, free black, and more predominantly, free coloured people, who formed a group almost in limbo, free from the constraints of slavery, yet not fully equipped to enter free white society. Within the two dominant groups there were also internal divisions that affected the dynamics between the larger groups.

White society was the dominant culture. The "primary value" that held white society together, to a greater degree than any

⁸ Clark Hine. D & Wittensten. K "Female Resistance: The Economics of Sex." Black Women Crossculturally. F.Steady (ed) Schenkman Books Inc, Rochester, 1981. pp.289-300 p.298

other aspect of white culture,⁹ was the idea that whites were superior and had the right to rule the island and keep the majority of the population in bondage.¹⁰ Elsa Goveia recognised this in her study of the British Leeward Islands and stated that when

Confronted with the great numbers of the Negro slaves who had to be kept in rigid subordination to the small white master class, the West Indian whites in the plantation colonies had come to regard their racial identity and exclusiveness as the bulwark of their power and privileges; and they used their control of the colonial society to ensure that no Negro, slave or free should be able to regard himself as the equal of a white, however poor or humble his origins or station might be.¹¹

This value was driven by the desire by whites to gain and keep economic advantages for themselves alone. The enslavement of African people was the best way for whites to do this, as whites could automatically gain supervisory positions, and earn extra money through having a small number of slaves for hire, or speculating in the market by buying slaves and selling them for a profit.¹²

To ensure their position of dominance, whites introduced laws that cemented their place legally, and developed an ideology based on stereotypes that defined the African Slave as having "non-human and anti-natural habits."¹³ For example, Edward Long wrote of African women

"Ludicrous as the opinion may seem, I do not think that an oran-outang husband would be any dishonour to an Hottentot female; for what are these Hottentots? - They

⁹ Burnard. T "Thomas Thistlewood becomes a Creole." Unpublished Paper presented to Kite Flying Seminar. University of Canterbury. 1994

¹⁰ Goveia. E Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century. New Haven, 1965 p.312

¹¹ Goveia. E Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands. p.312

¹² Goveia. E Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands. p.208

¹³ Lewis. G Main Currents of Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society In Its Ideological Aspects. The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1983. p.98

are, say most credible writers, a people certainly very stupid, and very brutal."¹⁴

These kind of stereotypes were often based on questionable information from contemporary travellers' accounts of Africa.¹⁵ It suited whites, however, to think of their slaves as closer to animal than human, because as Long stated¹⁶

The planters do not want to be told, that their Negroes are human creatures. If they believe them to be of human kind, they cannot regard them . . . as no better than dogs or horses.¹⁷

While Thistlewood does not appear to have held such overtly racial views, the fact that he did not question the enslavement of Africans meant that, by his silence, he accepted the status quo. In so doing, he accepted that white had the right to dominate black. The prominence of the ideology of the superiority of white skin meant that, compared to contemporary European society, the white community was remarkably free from class barriers.¹⁸ The unity of the white community in the West Indies was commented on by many contemporaries who visited and resided in Jamaica. For example Bryan Edwards in his 1801 account, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* stated that:

The poorest White person seems to consider himself nearly on a level with the richest . . . It is not difficult to trace the origin of this principle. It arises, without a doubt, from the pre-eminence and distinction which are necessarily attached even to the complexion of a White Man, in a country where complexion, generally speaking, distinguishes freedom from slavery.¹⁹

¹⁴ Long. E *History of Jamaica.* London. 1776. vol 2 p.364

¹⁵ Bush. B *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838.* Heinemann Publishers and Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1990. p.13

¹⁶ The views of Edward Long while representative in many ways of Jamaican white society, were at the extreme end of the spectrum of opinion of the nature of Africans and the behaviour of slaves as animalistic.

¹⁷ Long. E *History of Jamaica.* vol 2. p.270

¹⁸ Burnard. T "Thomas Thistlewood Becomes a Creole." p.17

¹⁹ cited in Goviea. E *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands* p.213

There were certain behaviours expected of the members of the white community, and, provided these were adhered to, whites could become part of the accepted society regardless of background. One such behaviour was the practise of hospitality, or the welcoming of any fellow white into their home for food, drink or a bed for the night.²⁰ Thistlewood participated in an active social life and regularly visited and was visited by his neighbours and associates, as well as offering food and shelter to unknown travellers passing through. Thistlewood's most frequent companions were other men of middling station, such as overseers, shopkeepers and sea captains. However, the nature of white society was such, that Thistlewood also mixed with his betters in the plantocracy to a degree which would have been unthinkable in Britain at the time.²¹ Within the first few years that Thistlewood was in Jamaica, Colonel Barclay, one of the richest men in Jamaica, had invited him to dinner.²² This was an invitation that Thistlewood could never have received if he had stayed in Lincolnshire and shows the extent to which racial solidarity broke down class barriers.

Running alongside the white community and culture, was the culture of the slaves, based on a mixture of African traditions and Creole adaptations. Slave culture may not have been the dominant culture, but, because slaves vastly outnumbered whites, it was the predominant culture. The development of a slave culture allowed slaves a degree of autonomy over their lives, by providing an alternate set of values and structures from those imposed on them by the whites. Where it was possible, slaves retained African traditions, such as naming practices. Slaves also regularly engaged in African dances, music and ceremonies. Funerals were particularly important to this process as they so contrasted to European practices. Thistlewood records the funerals of several slaves as well as many whites and they show the way the two ceremonies

²⁰ Burnard. T "Thomas Thistlewood Becomes a Creole." p.19

²¹ Burnard. T "Thomas Thistlewood Becomes a Creole." p.18

²² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/3 Tuesday 7 January 1752 p.6

contrasted. In 1767 Thistlewood records the funeral of an Egypt slave Quashe

all last night & today, a vast company, with singing etc at the nigroe house with Franke, for the loss of her husband, Quashe. She killed a heifer, several hoggs etc to entertain her company with.²³

Compare this to the more sombre tone of the funeral of Mr Emetson, a close associate of Thistlewood.

to Mr Emetson's in the Savanna and attended his burial in yl: church yard, between 10 and 11 o'clock in yl: forenoon. I had a pair of gloves, old mr wade, mr Jn Collins, Capt Leicester, dr Attwood, mr moodie, mr Stone, mr James Tomlinson and mr hayward bearers.²⁴

Slave funerals were a celebration of life in the African tradition, while the white was a solemn occasion in the British tradition. The nature of funerals provided an opportunity not only for the community to meet, but to express their beliefs and attitudes. In doing this funerals highlight the continuing differences between the black and white communities.

The level of knowledge that the white community had about the slave community and culture would have varied from individual to individual, depending on the level of direct contact the person had with slaves. It is possible, however, that slaves wished to keep as many of their beliefs and practices as they were able to away from the prying eyes of the white community in order to avoid interference in, and maintain the independence of them. That this existed can be seen in the successful plotting of revolts, for example Tackey's Rebellion which affected the Westmoreland area in 1760.

However, there were chinks in the armour of both communities, and in many ways slave women provided the link between the two. Peter Wilson goes so far as to say, that

²³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/18 Sunday 5 July 1767 p.165

²⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Saturday 22 April 1769 p.71

the total society was marked by a complete separation of the races, with one major exception: white men and black slave women mated, though they did not marry.²⁵

In the West Indies, unlike the American South, the relationships between these two groups were conducted openly and had widespread acceptance. Edward Long states

"Many are the men of every rank, quality, and degree here, who would rather riot in these goatish embraces, than share the pure and lawful bliss derived from matrimonial, mutual love. . . "²⁶

There were two reasons why these relationships were so widespread. First, slave women provided greater sexual opportunity for white middle class men than they had access to in Britain.²⁷ The whites consciously constructed a stereotype for slave women as being sexually promiscuous, and "exuding a warm animal sensuality"²⁸ in order to justify their own passion towards them, and therefore blame the women themselves for their own exploitation. Thistlewood himself, however, provides no rationale for his exploitation of the slave women who surrounded him. He did not have an outwardly racist ideology that justified his behaviour, but merely seems to see access to women as a perk of the job, and, as such, found no need to justify it. Second, the lack of suitable female companions among the white community, meant that "the potential bridegroom found the idea of a blushing English rose in the tropics an unobtainable"²⁹ goal. Marriage was often seen, by upwardly mobile men, as an inconvenience. Married men were often disadvantaged when seeking positions as overseers or book-

²⁵ Wilson. PJ Crab Antics: The Social Anthropology of English Speaking Negro Societies of the Caribbean. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1973. p.193

²⁶ Long. E History of Jamaica. vol 2 p.328

²⁷ Mullin. M "Women and the Comparative Study of American Negro Slavery." Slavery and Abolition. 6, May 1985, pp.25-40 p.32

²⁸ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society Heinemann Publishers and Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1990. p15

²⁹ Braithwaite. E The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971. p.142

keepers, the first rung on the ladder of success in White Jamaican society.³⁰

Thistlewood never made any move towards finding a white wife. The reason for this, while he never explicitly stated it, probably arose from these types of motives. Thistlewood would have recognised that a wife was an impediment to his progress to gain financial independence. It would have prevented him gaining positions as an overseer, but it would also have been a drain on the financial resources he had gained. It could also have been because from the mid 1750's he no longer needed a wife because Phibbah was filling that gap in his life. While in many ways Phibbah fulfilled the role of a wife she was no impediment to his financial growth. Phibbah not only would not have prevented him taking a position but was financially independent and had the ability to add to Thistlewood's income. In addition, Thistlewood seemed to have little time for the social life in which a wife may have wanted to participate in, such as attending dances and the theatre. Phibbah, on the other hand, had her own circle of friends and could operate an independent life which made few demands on Thistlewood's time and attention. By the 1780's Thistlewood's social life included some of the more genteel activities available to the white community, but by then he was too comfortable with Phibbah, and too set in his ways to find a European wife to accompany him to such occasions.

White men entered into sexual relations with slave women on all levels. The most important to the fluidity of Jamaican society were the small group of women who became the de facto wives of the white men. These women were able to influence the decisions of their white benefactors, and were a group of "women whose role in the subtle control of plantation slaves should not be underestimated."³¹ In Thistlewood's life, Phibbah, more than anyone else, influenced the way in which he controlled his slaves, and, in subtle ways, she improved the lot of slaves,

³⁰ Patterson. O The Sociology of Slavery. London 1867 p.42

³¹ Braithwaite. E The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820.
p.143

not only through tempering Thistlewood's behaviour but also in more tangible ways such as offering gifts or assistance. In this way, Phibbah and other women in her position were able to mediate between the two communities. They lived in close contact with the white community and mixed freely among them, exchanging gifts with them, and moving in some social circles together. This meant that slave mistresses were able to gain an intimate knowledge of white behaviour. The women could use this information both to assist themselves to appear more "free", or, to assist the slave community to resist white authority.

Domestic or house slaves were also close to the white society. Women predominated in these occupations. Therefore, again, it was the women that provided the link between whites and blacks. These women were constantly in contact with the whites, and sometimes even physically separated from the rest of the slave community as they were required to sleep in the great house instead of the slave village. These women were also more likely to be mulatto, and to become the long term mistresses of white men. In Thistlewood's diary it is this group of women who formed an important force in his life. Phibbah was the head of the Egypt kitchen when Thistlewood took up with her and as such was an important person in her own right. The domestic slaves in the surrounding districts formed friendships and mixed freely with each other. When Thistlewood resided on the Penn, he frequently recorded the visitors who called, not only to see him, but also to see Phibbah and the other slaves. These entries suggest that a close network existed between these women throughout the district. In 1767, for example, Thistlewood noted that:

AM Phib, Paradise house Franke & Stephen Parkingson's Betty come here, & dined here. PM we walked about &c Mulatto John also with them, and in the evening the 2 latter and John went away.³²

³² Thistlewood. T Op cit Monson 31/18 Sunday 27 September 1767 p.231

This group of women acted as mediators between the two communities, and as such held a powerful position within Jamaican society. Domestic slaves and their masters lived in close quarters with each other. This often put domestics in a position to have an intimate knowledge of their master's behaviour and affairs. These women were thus a source of information into the activities of other whites to their masters. Thistlewood often picks up tit bits of information about his neighbours from their slaves.

Indian Jenny, Says Mrs Gordon used to Cuckold dr Gordon with one dr Forbes, to her knowledge frequently - and dr Gordon, her, with Aurelia &c³³

The domestic women could also use this information to aid slave resistance. They could not only act directly by poisoning the master, or allowing easy access to the larder for stealing. They could also pass on information about the daily rituals or movements of their masters to slaves who might wish to take retribution on their master. Domestic women, therefore, were able to help the slave community not only through pleading for leniency but also through affirmative resistance. By acting in this way they identified their interests with the slave community. Domestic slave women had a fine line to tread, however, as because they benefitted from white domination as it artificially at times raised their standard of living above that of the field slaves, they were sometimes implicated as turncoats, or traitors to their own people. In order to maintain a secure position within both communities domestic women had to find a balance between compliance, flattery with the master and covert resistance and identity with slave desires.

In addition, they were a source of information to whites about slave culture and community activities. This was important as it gave members of the white community who were interested a better understanding of the mechanisms of slave life and in so doing helped break down their stereotypes about it. This may go some way to explain the differences in attitude between Long

³³ Thistlewood. T Op cit Monson 31/8 Thursday 11 August 1757 p.127

and Thistlewood, as Thistlewood took time to learn some aspects of slave existence, and developed intimate friendship with a number of slaves, whereas Long built his ideas on assumptions about African culture and its people and had little first hand knowledge of either. Thistlewood gains much information from Phibbah and her friends including not only the local gossip but also knowledge of African remedies and folklore. For example, he learns about some of the African folklore from listening to his and other domestics telling stories in the kitchen.

Mr Say's Vine told many diverting nancy stories /as negroes call them/ this evening at my house. She tells them very cleverly ³⁴

The more knowledge white people gained about slave community and culture, the more likely they should have been to recognise that, contrary to the stereotype, slaves were not animals but humans capable of creating a meaningful existence for themselves. It could be argued that Thistlewood modified his behaviour the more contact he had with Phibbah and her friends, and the more he learned about their community and culture. Certainly, Thistlewood toned down the excesses of his behaviour in the late 1750's when he had spent some years in Jamaica, and had an established relationship with Phibbah. This may have been because Thistlewood saw slaves as human beings, but, more likely that he had more confidence in his own ability to control the situation. Slave owners who had close connections with the slave community would also have recognised the links between family members and this may have made them less likely to randomly separate family members through sale.* The history of slavery, however, suggests more rather than less distance emerged between the two cultures over time and certainly during the nineteenth century there was a hardening of white attitudes towards slaves.

³⁴ Thistlewood. T Op cit Monson 31/19 Saturday 17 September 1768. p.161

* For example see Dunn. RS "Sugar Production and Slave Women in Jamaica."

Cultivation and Culture: Labour and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas. I.Berlin & PD Morgan (ed) University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1993 p.58

Mulatto children, the product of the relationships between white men and slave women, also challenged the way masters viewed their slaves. Moralists condemned sexual liaisons, between white men and slave women, as lustful, but in fact they were an important interaction between the two groups,. The relationships forced masters to accept that at least some slaves were human, as they were their children or "wives."³⁵ This may have made some masters think twice about their behaviour towards the slaves, as they could ask themselves "Would I want this to happen to my child?" In so doing it may have toned down their hard line attitudes towards the greater slave population.

Mulattoes were the tangible link between the black and white communities and were largely the group that made up the third group in Jamaican society of free blacks and coloureds. There were, however, no guarantees that a white father automatically meant freedom. Thomas Thistlewood recognised the son born to Phibbah in 1760, and in May 1762 bought his manumission from John and Mary Cope. That he accepted paternity is shown in the manumission notice as it gives John Thistlewood as a surname
 John and Mary Cope manumit John Thistlewood, a mulatto boy slave, son of their Negro woman Phoeba.³⁶

Not all children, however, were so fortunate. Even in Thistlewood's own diaries there is evidence of this. Jenny, his second steady partner, also had a son who was likely to have been Thistlewood's. Thistlewood never acknowledged this son. It would seem that there was even less chance that white men would manumit their slave mistresses. It was often the case that while the children might be freed, the mothers were left in bondage. Thistlewood bought Phibbah's manumission only on his death in 1786, some 24 years after that of their son, and even then the release had a proviso

I order and direct that my Executors hereinafter named do as soon as is convenient may be after my decease purchase the freedom of a certain Negroe woman slave named Phibba

³⁵ Dunn. R S Sugar and Slaves p.254

³⁶ Hall. D In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86.
 Mac Millan Publishing, London, 1989. p.314

the property of the Honourable John Cope and who has been living with me a considerable time past provided nevertheless that no more is required for such freedom than the sum of Eighty Pounds current money of Jamaica.³⁷

Those who were freed did make considerable gains, however, often gaining property when their protectors died. Provisions were also made in Thistlewood's will for such measures for Phibbah should her manumission be granted.

There were other avenues open to slaves to gain manumission, but mulatto slaves were the most likely to be able to capitalise on them. The lighter skin colour of the mulattoes meant they were more likely to be moved into the house, or apprenticed as an artisan than they were to work in the field.³⁸ These occupations provided slaves an opportunity to make money for their own benefit as they were able to use their skills to make money, both out of working hours, and on a commission basis from their master. This allowed mulatto slaves to save money to enable them to purchase their own manumission.

The free blacks and coloureds found themselves in an awkward position within Jamaican society.³⁹ They were separated from their community of origin and their desire to be recognised as free, in many cases, prevented them from associating with the slave community. Despite gaining legal freedom, however, the colour of their skin meant they were unable to become fully incorporated members of white society.⁴⁰ This state of limbo between the two cultures led to freed blacks and coloureds having an ambivalent status, most striving, through dress, religion, and education to imitate the whites and in so doing to become integrated into white society.⁴¹ Their efforts were largely in vain as white jealousy of free Mulatto achievement,

³⁷ Hall. D In Miserable Slavery. p.313

³⁸ Heuman. G Between Black and White: Race, Politics and the Free Coloureds in Jamaica, 1792-1865. Clio Press, Oxford, 1981. p.4

³⁹ Richardson. B C The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492-1992. A Regional Geography. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1992. p.69

⁴⁰ Heuman. G Between Black and White pp.4 & 5

⁴¹ Heuman. G Between Black and White p.13

combined with white fear of the distinction between colour and ownership of property, both land and slaves, being eroded⁴², prevented free coloureds from making inroads into the white community for more than a hundred years.⁴³ This led to freed blacks and coloureds living in large numbers in urban areas⁴⁴, cut off from both communities struggling to establish an identity and niche for themselves that struck a balance between the two cultures.

According to Thistlewood's diary, Thistlewood associated with several freed blacks and coloureds. The best example of the experience of a mulatto illustrated in the diary is that of his son, John. John was born into slavery as the property of John Cope. Thistlewood purchased his manumission when he was a child though John continued to live with Phibbah until he went to school at age four, boarding in the Savanna, while returning home for weekends and holidays. Thistlewood's continued association with Phibbah meant that John mixed with both the slave and free communities. At age fifteen he was apprenticed as a carpenter to a white family in Savanna la Mar

This morning John went to Savanna la Mar, to Mr hornby's to begin his Apprenticeship. Jimmy carried his Bed. And brought back his horse.⁴⁵

John entered the world of the young free male by joining the militia and regularly attending exercises. At the same time he stayed in close contact with his mother and other members of the slave community. This meant that many of his close associates were not white men, but young black and coloured men, both slave and free. The tension between the two cultures in his life can be seen in his funeral. John is given a European style funeral by Thistlewood, but those who attended were Africans and mulattoes, both free and slave.

⁴² Heuman. G Between Black and White p.6

⁴³ Hall. D "Jamaica" Neither Slave Nor Free: The Freedom of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World. P. Cohen & J. Greene (ed). Cambridge University Press, New York, 1992. pp.193-213 p.210

⁴⁴ A large proportion of the white population were also urban dwellers, with a concentration in Kingston.

⁴⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/26 Tuesday 2 May 1775 p.80

a little after sunset buried John in the old garden, between the pimento tree & the house, mr Tho: mordiner read the service over him bearers were, mr dorrill mcdonald /carpenter/ dickie perrin /carpenter/ Billy Townshend /Taylor/ dickie watkins /carpenter/ Wm Snow /carpenter/ Edmund more /Cap:n of sea/ Tho: Mordiner read yl: service - also george dorrant /carpenter/ John oldmost /carpenter/ Jimmy Stewart etc etc

Miss bessie brown, mrs brown. Egypt Sukey Crookshanks, little Mimer, mimer lapey, Jenny graham, daphne & her daughter jenny etc etc Jenny young, house franke etc etc⁴⁶

This suggests that while John's outward actions sometimes signalled his desire to become English, he was unable to shake off his roots and was more frequently in the company of other coloureds. The combination of the two forces in his life must have caused inner tension not only for John but others like him.

Slave men found it much more difficult to forge links between themselves and the white community. Their inability to develop intimate connections with white people hampered their ability to mediate between the two communities. A double standard also existed in prescription and law between white men and women. While it was perfectly acceptable for white men to have relations with black women, it was taboo for white women to have relations with black men. This meant that it was unlikely that slave men had familial connections with the white community. Sexual contact between white men and slave women often, while it introduced women to white culture, further alienated men as it caused another area of frustration for slave men who felt unable to prevent the advances of white men against their mothers, sisters and daughters. This attitude is commented on in West India Manners and Customs, a guide to Jamaica published in 1793.

In the evening the manager is obliged to procure some of the finest young wenches for the gentlemen . . . their black husband's or poor *backra*, being neglected, silently pass those nights in disagreeable slumbers wrecked with jealousy and torture.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/31 Thursday 7 August 1780 pp.144-145

⁴⁷ Moreton. JB West India Manners and Customs. London 1793 pp.77-78

It is not clear from the diary how the slave men felt about Thistlewood's exploitation of their women. It is likely that it was a source of tension between Thistlewood and the male slaves. Thistlewood mentions the tension that the behaviour of other white men's behaviour caused, and in some cases goes to great trouble to prevent a white underling from treading on a male slave's toes. For example, when his nephew John Thistlewood arrived in Jamaica, Thomas encouraged him to explore the new surroundings which seemed to include the slave women, but Thomas put limits on John's behaviour.

I understand J:T wants my Nanny, but I don't intend he
Should take her ffrom Cubbenna.⁴⁸

Slave men were less important in Thistlewood's initiation to the slave community and culture. While he does develop a level of respect for some slave men, they were limited in their ability to advance, as their only opportunity to attract attention was through excellence in the productive sphere.

Despite the chinks within Jamaican society the most frequent form of contact between the two groups involved the area of production where the master issued the orders for the slaves to follow. The master-slave relationship has been the topic of much historical debate. It is now recognised that the relationship is more complicated than a simple dominance and subordination dialect. As David Brion Davis suggested,

Even the most authoritarian master, supported by the most oppressive laws, was to some extent limited by the will of his slaves, who had the power to appeal, flatter, disobey, sabotage, and rebel.⁴⁹

The relationship between masters and slaves was based on give and take due to the interdependent nature of their existence. This is especially true in societies such as Jamaica where whites were faced with few labour alternatives. Consequently, whites were heavily dependant on their slaves for profit. This idea has been developed into a concept of social parasitism by Orlando Patterson. He believes that the master was dependent on

⁴⁸ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/15 Thursday 22 March 1764 p.85

⁴⁹ Davis. B D The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture. Ithica. New York. 1966. p.251

the slave, and was the parasite who lived off the profit and product of the slave who was the host, while at the same time the host slave was reliant on the master for his/her basic needs.⁵⁰

In the West Indies the prime concern of white men was profit, and as such, they were less concerned, than their American South counterparts, with aspects of their slaves' lives that had no direct influence over their ability to work. Littlefield would see this attitude as fitting into the industrial model of slavery, in which the master is first and foremost a business man, and where, therefore, his prime concern is productive efficiency.⁵¹ The result of this largely business oriented view of slaves, Littlefield claims, was a greater amount of individual freedom outside work hours.⁵² The way in which masters in Jamaica chose to provide their slaves with provision grounds, in which they could grow food, and have livestock, instead of giving the slaves all their food as a handout, enabled the slaves to be largely responsible for their own food. This created the first area of compromise for both parties. The masters gave up the right to have complete control over the slaves in order to save on direct outlay for provisions. Masters gained a more productive workforce by developing the provision ground system. The slaves relied on the grounds for food, but also, enjoyed the time and space the system provided them with. This meant that they wished to preserve it. Therefore, in order to ensure that the system remained, slaves were more likely to do the master's bidding during their work day in the knowledge they would be left in peace afterwards.

The entries in Thistlewood's diary concerning his slaves certainly could be read in these terms. The predominant

⁵⁰ Patterson. O Slavery and Social Death. A Corporative Study. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1982. pp.335-6

⁵¹ Littlefield. D "Plantations, Paternalism, and Profitability: Factors Affecting African Demography in the Old British Empire." Journal of Southern History. vol XLVII. no 2. May 1981pp.171-189. p.169.
Littlefield developed his theory through studying the rice culture of South Carolina.

⁵² Ibid.

references concern their work patterns, illnesses which relate to their availability for work, and their punishments, that were most often inflicted because of a disruption to the level of productivity. Thistlewood does not seem to have interfered greatly in the slave community, and in some ways encouraged the slaves to develop their own community by allowing his slaves a degree of freedom of movement to surrounding plantations which created and strengthened wider slave community ties. Thistlewood used the provision ground system to his advantage, especially in the bad years such as 1770 when the crops failed, as instead of handing out extra provisions at personal cost he allowed the slaves time to work on their own grounds and in so doing shifted the responsibility for feeding them from him to themselves, and avoided large cost handouts.

This attitude contrasts with the paternal ethos of the planters of the American South built on the idea that the slaves were part of an extended family unit, over which the master was the just and bountiful authority figure⁵³. This meant that American planters, at least in the antebellum period, were more inclined to interfere in the workings of the slave community than were their West Indian counterparts. Instead of encouraging the slaves to develop a degree of self sufficiency, they attempted to set themselves up as benevolent patriarchs from whom all things came. This can be seen in the action of James Hammond of Silver Bluff Plantation. He was constantly trying to impose himself on his slaves' way of life. One symbol of the battle which ensued between Hammond and his slaves was religion, and freedom of expression. Hammond attempted to prevent the slaves from engaging in their own form of worship. He did this by building a church and banning any other forms of religious expression from the plantation. The slaves outwardly complied with Hammond, but continued their own form of worship

⁵³ Craton. M "Reluctant Creoles: The Planters' World in the British West Indies" Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire. University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill 1991. pp.315-359

secretly.⁵⁴ Hammond's slaves were not encouraged to provide for themselves. Instead, he tried to set himself up as a distant but merciful benefactor. Hammond distributed provisions personally with much ritual and ceremony. In this way he attempted to present himself as a source from which all blessings flowed, and thus sought to reinforce his power. The response from the slaves was again outward compliance while at the same time supplementing their diet through small gardens hunting and gathering.⁵⁵ The larger planters in Jamaica, such as Edward Long, may have adopted an attitude similar to that of Hammond. For Thistlewood and small landowners like him, this was a foreign concept.

The master/slave relationship was never static but constantly changed as each confronted the other with demands and expectations, always seeking to gain an upper hand in negotiations.⁵⁶ Masters and slaves had tools available to them to gain control of the negotiation process. Masters used a combination of force, backed up by ideological strategies that characterised the slave as a dependent child,⁵⁷ and slaves used strategies of both overt and covert resistance.

Jamaican slave law decreed that slaves were chattels, and that their productive and reproductive functions were the property of their master. As such they could be bought and sold at the whim of the master, without regard for familial connections. Thistlewood, however, did not sell many of his slaves, and those whom he did, do not seem to have distinct family connections on the plantation or penn. Dunn's study of the Barham estate of Mesopotamia, an estate close to the area in which Thistlewood lived, has shown that family groups were often bought and sold together.⁵⁸ Jamaican law also gave the masters a licence to

⁵⁴ Faust. DG "Culture Conflict and Community: The Meaning of Power on an Ante-Bellum Plantation." The Culture and Community of Slavery ed Finkleman. P. Garland Pub Inc, New York. 1989 pp.87-103 p.91

⁵⁵ Faust. DG "Culture, Conflict and Community." p.94

⁵⁶ Faust. DG "Culture, Conflict and Community." p.90

⁵⁷ Patterson. O Slavery and Social Death. A Corporative Study. p.337

⁵⁸ Dunn. RS "Sugar Production and Slave Women in Jamaica." p.58

work the slaves as hard as they pleased, and punish them viciously as the slave had no formal channels for complaint open to him or her.

The use of harsh punishments was a common way to control slaves. There were very few limits placed on masters by the law for the administering of punishment. Jamaican masters were notorious as ruthless and cruel in their methods of punishing slaves. Charles Leslie noted this in his book *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica*, written in 1740.

They have indeed here the severest ways of punishing. No Country Excels them in the barbourous Treatment of Slaves, in the methods they put them to death . . .⁵⁹

Thistlewood witnessed punishment as a way of controlling slaves in his first few weeks in Jamaica, when he records in his diary

Many runaway negroes took up, mr dorrill had his own whipt severely, and rubbed with pepper, salt, and lime juice.⁶⁰

When he became an overseer himself he quickly adopted similar methods. It would seem that over time Thistlewood became more secure and confident in his position and it became less necessary to use torturous punishment. The cruel and inventive punishments became a thing of the past by the early 1760's and whipping and time in the bilboes became the standard punishments that Thistlewood administered, and even these became less frequent as time went by.

Despite the profit oriented view of the West Indian planters, the paternal ethos, so prevalent in the American South, was not unknown to them. This is the image that Edward Long provides as the model for the perfect master:

His authority over them is like that of an ancient patriarc: conciliating affection by the mildness of its exertion, and claiming respect by the justice and propriety of its

⁵⁹ Leslie. C *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica*. 3rd Edition. Edinburgh, 1740.
Letter 2 p.42

⁶⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/1 Thursday 15 May 1750 p.299

decisions and discipline, it attracts the love of the honest and good; while it awes the worthless into reformation.⁶¹

Through this role the master intended to make his workforce loyal and contented, bound to him with bonds of affection, and therefore eager to work hard in an obedient and subordinate way. Thistlewood exhibits some behaviour which could be seen in this way. It can also be seen, however, as behaviour associated with good management techniques for positive worker relations. They could, therefore, be seen as an extension of the industrial model of slavery, rather than the actions of a benevolent father. Thistlewood gave out new tools and equipment periodically. This is not benevolent action, but a bid to increase productivity, as poor tools decreased productivity, so it was in his interests to keep the slaves equipment updated. Thistlewood also dealt with the health care of his slaves, by dispensing medication and treatments as well as allocating time off. The extent to which the slaves sought Thistlewood's advice about their health is probably an indication that they needed his permission to stay away from work, rather than a lack of viable alternatives. Thistlewood also adjudicated between slaves in disputes and would take retribution on behalf of a slave if necessary. For example in 1760 he punished two negroes at another's request.

Flogg'd London & Mn: Lucy, upon Plato's complaint."⁶²

He also sought recompense for his negroes if they were wronged by slaves from another plantation. In 1761 Thistlewood tried to get justice for two women robbed by neighbouring slaves.

x Margaritta robb'd off 4 Bitts Worth of ffish, by mr Crawffords Negroes . . . AM Rode to mr Crawffords, (Albany Estate) took mn lydde & margaritta with me, was in mr Crawffords ffield, Boiling house &c, and they choosing one of the Boilers Named Tom, as the person who took their fish: Mr Crawfford promises to make all possible inquiry⁶³

Thistlewood settled disputes not to make himself appear as a divine justice to the slaves, but because a content workforce was a more productive one. Therefore, it was in Thistlewood's interests to settle disputes quickly and to be seen to be just.

⁶¹ Long. E A History of Jamaica. vol 2. p.271

⁶² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/11 Saturday 3rd April 1760 p.83

⁶³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12 Sunday 15th and Monday 16th February 1761. pp35-36

This suggests that while slaves may have wished to remain largely independent of Thistlewood, he would have sometimes been a welcome intruder in their midst.

Whites in Jamaica were always nervous about possible slave rebellion. Thistlewood noted, especially in his early years, many reports of unrest and suspicions of plots.

In y^l: Evening we heard a Shell Blown twice (at Smithfield) as an Alarm, Could see no appearance of fire, Mr Dorrill greatly feared it was an insurrection of y^l: Negroes; they being very ripe for it, almost all over y^l: Island.⁶⁴

This turned out to be nothing but a false alarm. However, the fact that Dorrill was quick to jump to the conclusion that it was an insurrection is proof that whites feared uprising could erupt at any time. The suspicion that whites had about slaves often excluded those with whom they had the most contact. The whites appear to have held the idea, albeit mistakenly, that when the slaves did revolt it would not be their own slaves who were tied to the family by bonds of loyalty and affection. This attitude is demonstrated in the references to the slave community in a collection of letters written to Jane Brodbent, by her family in Jamaica, while she attended boarding school in England⁶⁵. On her birthday several family members wrote and told her of the slaves celebrating the event.

. . . I must not omit telling you that the 28th of August was not only particularly noticed by Us, but likewise by the negroes, who celebrated the day with much cheerfulness, and were all united in their good wishes to you. Marshall and Eliza present their respectful remembrances to you, and are obliged at your kind enquires about them.⁶⁶

It is hard to assess the exact level of trust that Thistlewood had in the slaves who surrounded him, or they in him. It certainly changed over time. During the first eight years he had very little faith in the loyalty or trustworthiness of the slaves, and frequently worried about this. He has real, and probably

⁶⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/2 Wednesday 31 July 1751 p.177

⁶⁵ This collection of letters span the years 1788 to 1796. The letters are sent to Jane Brodbent who has at boarding school in England from Jamaica. They are from her mother, father, aunt, sister, and some friend who are residing in Jamaica.

⁶⁶ Mozley. G (ed) Letters to Jane From Jamaica, 1788-1796. The West india Committee, London, ? p.40

justified, suspicions about the slaves trying to take his life on more than one occasion.

had not been above a quarter off an hour in Bed, before took with a violent Vomitting and purging, extreme Sick, tho' very well beffore - Suspect Poison - Continue ill all day⁶⁷

As Thistlewood became more relaxed, and more established in Jamaica, he seemed to assume a higher degree of trust and loyalty from his slaves. This attitude is particularly evident when he moved to the Penn and allowed slaves to carry guns, have relative freedom of movement, and meet in large groups on his property. During Tackey's Rebellion, in 1760, Thistlewood was forced to arm his slaves in order to protect the estate. While there may have been few alternatives, Thistlewood was taking a calculated risk that the slaves would not turn the guns onto him or the other whites on the property. His first reaction on hearing the news was as follows

Immediately Arm'd our Negroes and kept a strict guard and sharp look out . . .

Later in the day he notes

. . . Col Barclay told me we had but bad success, being defeated and some off our people kill'd from which perceive our Negroes have good intelligence being greatly elevated and ready to rise now we are in the most danger⁶⁸

Despite this warning to himself, Thistlewood was again prepared to arm his negro men the following day. This suggests he expected a high degree of loyalty amongst the slaves.

The slaves developed overt and covert resistance in order to counteract the master's power. Open rebellion, however, was rare, and most resistance was in the form of non co-operation through slow or inefficient work, running away, acts of sabotage or stealing.⁶⁹ Slaves recognised the master's profit motive and knew that their co-operation was essential to maximise profits, and therefore used these methods to curb the margins the master was able to accrue. In the diary Thistlewood notes all these

⁶⁷ Thistlewood. T 31/4 Tuesday 23 January 1753 p.16

⁶⁸ Thistlewood. T 31/11 Thursday 29th May 1760 p.101

⁶⁹ Craton. M Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies. Ithica, 1982 p.53

types of resistance. He often expresses dissatisfaction with his slaves' progress, but, it is hard to pinpoint the slaves' motives. It may be that Thistlewood's expectations were too high, or that the slaves were overworked and undernourished and therefore unable to work any quicker. Running away, sabotage and stealing are more easily labelled as overt resistance and there are a good smattering of these throughout the diary. Most runaways seem to fit into the pattern that Faust recognised in his work in the American South, in so far that most seemed to remain locally and return after a few days of their own accord.⁷⁰

Another powerful weapon that the slaves used in their struggle to gain the upper hand was the creation of a dual personality, or what Wyatt-Brown terms, a "mask of obedience."⁷¹ This enabled slaves to outwardly comply with their master's wishes through taking on the persona of the ignorant child with which the masters stereotyped them, while at the same time retaining their dignity. This concept was developed in the Jamaican context by Orlando Patterson, who was following in the footsteps of Stanley Elkins work on the Sambo characteristics of slaves in the American South.⁷² Patterson calls this personality trait "Quashee" and sees it as a way of responding to the stereotypes that the whites had developed to characterise the Negro slave, such as a childlike, compulsive liar, and stupid.⁷³ Patterson sees the "Quashee" personality as serving three functions.⁷⁴ First, the slave could see that although the master outwardly protested about the stupidity of their slaves, it gave him inward pleasure for the slave to be that way as it justified his rationale for slavery. Second, for slaves to disguise their true feelings, gave them the psychological satisfaction of having duped the master. Third, if the slaves wanted to get rid of an

⁷⁰ Faust. DG "Culture, Conflict and Community." p.97

⁷¹ Wyatt-Brown. B "The Mask of Obedience: Male Slave Psychology in the Old South." The Culture and Community of Slavery. Finkleman. P(ed) Garland Pub Inc, New York, 1989. pp.378-402

⁷² Elkins. S Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969.

⁷³ Patterson. O The Sociology of Slavery. pp.175-177

⁷⁴ Patterson. O The Sociology of Slavery p.180

overseer or book-keeper they could do so by being the perfect "Quashee" and being stupid and inefficient. To be poor workers reflected on the overseer and might lead the master to replace him. Therefore, through the adoption of this persona, slaves were able to play on the paternal instincts of the master⁷⁵, and through so doing gain a level of trust which then allowed them to stretch the limits of their bondage. Constantly playing a different persona, however, may have created psychological pressures, or, could have led to the internalising of the persona. Through the use of these devices masters and their slaves were constantly jockeying for position.

The nature of this type of resistance means it is not possible to assess the extent to which the slaves in Thistlewood's diary created a mask of obedience. It seems likely that this type of behaviour did exist amongst the slaves⁷⁶, as while Thistlewood often complained about the work habits of the slaves in the fields, their own provision grounds seem to have been a success. Many slaves owned livestock, which they would have bought with money from the sale of goods from the provision grounds. This suggests that not only were the slaves capable of efficient work habits, but also of basic time management.

While the master/slave relationship may have been the most important division within society, the status and role of slave women cannot satisfactorily be analysed without cross reference to white women⁷⁷ as gender formed an important division within both groups within Jamaican society. White men exercised power over both groups of women, which could have been grounds for a joining together against the power of white male structures. This did not occur, however, because white women identified more strongly with their colour than their

⁷⁵ Craton. M Testing the Chains. p.35

⁷⁶ For example, the driver Congo Sam, had masked his feelings towards Thistlewood well prior to his attacking him in December 1752.

⁷⁷ Bush. B "White 'Ladies', Coloured 'Favourites' and Black 'Wenches'; Some Considerations on Sex, Race and Class Factors in Social Relations in White Creole Society in the British Caribbean." Slavery and Abolition. 2. 1981. p.245

gender. Thistlewood's contact with white women was limited, but he records an incident in which John Cope, Thistlewood's Egypt employer, arrived drunk with a friend and demanded sexual favours from two of the slave women. They refused, and Cope had the slaves flogged and took them anyway. This upsets the female slave population beyond their normal tolerance level and Mrs Cope's waiting maid informed her of the incident. Upon checking the evidence and finding the story to be true, Mrs Cope took action against her husband and, while John Cope continued his philandering, slave women were not beaten for refusing him again. This was an isolated incident in which women of both races worked together. Most of the time, however, instead of working together, they spent their time, competing with one another for the attention of the white men.

White women, in Jamaica, found themselves in a difficult position, because in many ways they were surplus to requirements. Society was organised around the lifestyle of a single male. The predominant activities of the white community revolved around the traditional male activities of hunting, fishing and womanising. White women had little place within white Jamaican society, as even traditional roles for them such as running a plantation or household were removed, because they normally had housekeepers to do this. The demographical balance meant that white women were in a minority and there was no real niche for them in society other than as respectable wives and mothers. Thistlewood's contact with white women increased as he gained respectability and social standing within the white community. They remained, however, a small proportion of his acquaintances and with few exceptions were largely excluded from most of Thistlewood and his friends' activities. White women, therefore, were often forced to live in isolation with their only female company being their slave women. This led to many contemporary commentators, such as Edward Long and Maria Nugent, scorning them as slovenly and ill educated and, therefore, unfit for civilised society.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Bush. B "White 'Ladies', Coloured 'Favourites' and Black 'Wenches' p.255

The availability of slave women for white men, meant that white women were also surplus to the sexual needs of white men. They were forced to acknowledge that white men had slave mistresses on whom they were prepared to lavish gifts and attention.⁷⁹ This led to envy and jealousy by white women towards slave women. The expression of this was often tyrannical behaviour towards their domestic slaves in particular.

Women, both free and slave, were trapped by the stereotypes that white males placed on them. Slave women were destined to be no more than lascivious objects of sexual desire to be exploited at every opportunity, while white women were to be the bearers of respectability and moral rightness and as such often deprived of the affection they deserved. Although self development for women was very limited in eighteenth century society, the pigeon holing prevented any self development for women in Jamaica.⁸⁰ White women were often forced to keep up the facade of family life while their men reserved all their time and affection for their black or coloured mistress. In spite of this situation, the colour bar remained and while a mistress could be the principal recipient of love and attention they could never break the colour bar and raise the status to that of wife.⁸¹ This must have been cold comfort to the white women, but it meant that ultimately the power over the status of the mistress was in the hands of the master⁸² who could at any stage send her back to the field.

This is demonstrated in the diary in the actions of Thistlewood in his treatment of Jenny. During the time she lived with Thistlewood her standard of living was good, and she received lighter duties, and extra rations of food and clothes. When the relationship went through a rough patch, however, Thistlewood removed her privileges, and had no hesitation in returning her to

⁷⁹ Bush. B "White 'Ladies', Coloured 'Favourites' and Black 'Wenches" p.257

⁸⁰ Bush. B "White 'Ladies', Coloured 'Favourites' and Black 'Wenches" p.259

⁸¹ Bush. B "White 'Ladies', Coloured 'Favourites' and Black 'Wenches" p.258

⁸² Bush. B "White 'Ladies', Coloured 'Favourites' and Black 'Wenches" p.258

the slave village. For example in November 1753 Thistlewood recorded

"At night Quarrell'd with Jenny. turn'd her out of Doors."⁸³ By the time Thistlewood had established himself with Phibbah, Jenny was permanently returned to the slave village to work in the field, the privileges she gained with Thistlewood almost all gone. The extent of her demise is illustrated by Thistlewood when a year later he records "gave Jenny 2 Bitts, as she is much in want."⁸⁴ The way in which white men used women of both races meant that both white and black women were at the whim of white men, for whom they were reliant for not only status and comfort, but, in many cases, the basics of life.

No discussion of slave women's position would be complete without looking at the divisions within the slave community that were not gender based. The divisions were African versus Creole, field versus trade and domestic workers and Black versus mulatto. These intersected at many points along the way.

There seems no doubt that newly arrived Africans had some help in their adjustment to slave life from the more established Creole slaves. Thistlewood practised the idea of placing new negroes with established households as is evident from this entry

Old phibbah, and Invalid, died, had her grave dug, and buried, gave old Sharper some dram as She took him as New Nigroe; and he got her coffin made.⁸⁵

While this entry suggests that there are bonds between the two groups Edward Long reports

The Creole Blacks differ much from the Africans, not only in manners, but in beauty of shape, feature, and complexion. They hold the Africans in the utmost contempt . . .⁸⁶

There may be some truth in this statement, but it may be as a result of the European attitude towards the two groups, rather than any real distinction. Whites preferred Creoles, who, having

⁸³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/4 Thursday 20th November 1753 Ref 195

⁸⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Wednesday 4th May 1755 p.124

⁸⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/14 Saturday 16 July 1763 p.164

⁸⁶ Long. E A History of Jamaica. vol 2. p.410

been born into slavery, were generally regarded as having better accepted their condition, and as such were seen as having better character.⁸⁷ The preference for Creole slaves meant that they were more likely to be found in the ranks of the tradesmen, such as cooper, carpenters and masons, than Africans. Creole slaves were more likely to be among the domestic staff as they were seen, by whites, as more refined and more easily trained than African slaves. These positions not only released the slaves from the back breaking work of the field, but often allowed them greater freedom of movement throughout the district.⁸⁸ It was the greater ability of Creole slaves to move away from the field and benefit, not only physically, but socially and financially from their privileged positions, that would have emphasised the feeling of difference between Creole and African born slaves. Creole slaves were also more likely to speak English and therefore feel that they had a closer affinity to white culture than African born slaves. While Creole slaves brought elements of white culture to the slave community the African born slaves were important to the development of slave culture as they ensured the continued input of African values into it. In the diary, Creole slaves predominate amongst the artisans and domestic workers at Egypt.

Mulatto slaves were, by definition, Creole. Their lighter skin meant that they were even more likely to avoid field labour. Their occupational status combined with pretensions of grandeur on the part of some mulatto slaves, and often suspicion by the other slaves over their loyalty to the slave community due to their skin colour, meant that there was tension between Black and Mulatto slaves on a property.

Slave women can be found in all the sub groups that are found within the slave community. One of the most important divisions within the slave community, however, was based on gender. Gender was important not only in the way a slave was

⁸⁷ Braithwaite. E The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820.
p.164-5

⁸⁸ Braithwaite. E Op cit. p.155

perceived by the master, but also in the opportunities that were available to a slave for advancement, and in the behaviour and attitude of individuals towards their own community and status.

The following chapters deal in more detail with three important aspects of the slave women's lives; their productive function, their sexual and reproductive function and the role they played in creating a slave community and culture.

CHAPTER THREE PRODUCTIVE FUNCTION OF WOMEN SLAVES

"The sole reason for the existence of black women in the Caribbean was their labour value."¹ Slave women spent most of their time working on behalf of their master. Therefore, work was an important element of a female slave's life. The productive function of a slave also provided the greatest source of contact and interaction between masters and slaves. Thistlewood had an active interest in the productive aspect of his slaves' lives and the bulk of the diary entries concerning slaves concentrate on this area. Thistlewood had two specific concerns about his female slaves. He was interested in the slaves' productive function, or the ability of the slaves to work on behalf of him to create a profit. He was also interested in the slave women's sexual function, or the ability of slaves to provide gratification for Thistlewood. While Thistlewood worked on behalf of someone else it could be argued that these two aspects were of equal interest to him. Once he was his own master, however, the ability of his slaves to work and create profit became his primary interest. Working on behalf of their master was, however, only half the productive picture for slaves in Jamaica in regard to production. Masters, including Thistlewood, provided slaves with provision grounds in order to avoid issuing very large rations. This enabled slaves to grow crops and run livestock, both for consumption and sale to gain profit for their own benefit. The work slaves did on the provision grounds, and the profits which slaves made, enabled them to develop levels of autonomy, self esteem and pride that were not possible in areas where rations were handed out to the slaves.

This chapter seeks to understand the role gender played in the allocation of productive tasks by the master, and the ability of slave women to perform those tasks. It also seeks to understand the nature of the production that slaves engaged in on their own

¹ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. Heinemann Publishers and Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1990 p.33

behalf, and discover the role gender played in the distribution of tasks within the internal market system.

At first glance gender played little role in the productive life of a slave as both genders worked in the field. Closer examination, however, shows that differences based on gender did exist. The majority of Jamaican slaves worked in the field, and while these tasks were largely allocated in a genderless way, gender influenced both the ability to gain authority over other slaves, and the opportunities slaves had to work in occupations other than field labour. In the provision grounds work was allocated along gender lines, as for convenience and efficiency it was more sensible to divide tasks than for everyone to do all tasks.

Slaves were first and foremost labourers, and when purchasing new slaves this was the planter's primary consideration. Thistlewood makes his observation on the sort of slaves he would buy, in 1761

In regards to buying off Negroes, I would choose men boys, and girls, none exceeding 16 or 18 years old, as full grown man or woman seldom turn out well . . . those who have good calf to their legg and a small or moderated sized foot, are commonly, nimble Active negroes . . . have also observed that many new Negroes, who are bought fatt and sleek ffrom a board yl: ship. Soon fall away such in a plantation. . . Those whose Lips are pale, or whites of their Eyes yellowish, Seldom healthfull.²

In this description he is clearly looking for attributes that make a good worker, rather than a beautiful girl with whom to enter a sexual relation, or a woman with great child bearing potential. This meant that when there was a slave sale, men and women were marketed the same, as workers with little consideration to gender related differences.³ This was also reflected in the fact that the price that was received for a prime field slave was the same regardless of gender.⁴ In 1765 Thistlewood bought ten slaves from a slave ship at Lucea. The prices which he paid

² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12. Tuesday 17 March 1761. pp.59-60

³ Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados. New Brunswick, NJ, 1989. p.24

⁴ Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels p.33

clearly show age and physical condition influenced the sale price, and not gender.

. . . bought them off Mr Cuthbert at the following price: 2 men at £50 per head, 2 men-boys & 2 young women at £54 per head, 3 girls at £52 per head, and 1 boy at £51 = £535⁵

Slaves under Thistlewood's care performed a variety of tasks. The vast majority, however, were field slaves who toiled every day in the cane fields performing such tasks as planting, weeding, and harvesting. The work gangs he operated were largely treated as genderless with women sharing the same "back breaking work, miseries and punishments as men."⁶ Thomas Thistlewood kept close records of the slaves' work patterns, listing which slaves were involved in each activity every Monday, and more regularly during the busy seasons. The lists in his diary show that women and men were both used in the field work gangs to perform hard physical labour. This is true not only of the work gangs at Egypt, but in his own gang of slaves which he hired out to neighbouring plantations (see fig 1). This pattern can be seen in other plantation records, and also drawings of the time depicting slaves at field work, often portrayed women carrying out some of the heaviest labour.⁷ Research has shown that by the early nineteenth century, women workers were at least half or more of the ordinary field gangs, despite planters outwardly expressing a preference for male workers in the gangs.⁸

The health of the slaves constantly concerned slave holders, including Thistlewood, because, if a considerable proportion of their workforce was sick, profits were not maximised . This led Thistlewood to take an interest in the health of his slaves. Thistlewood was curious by nature, and from his first few days

⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/16 Monday 29 April 1765 p.95

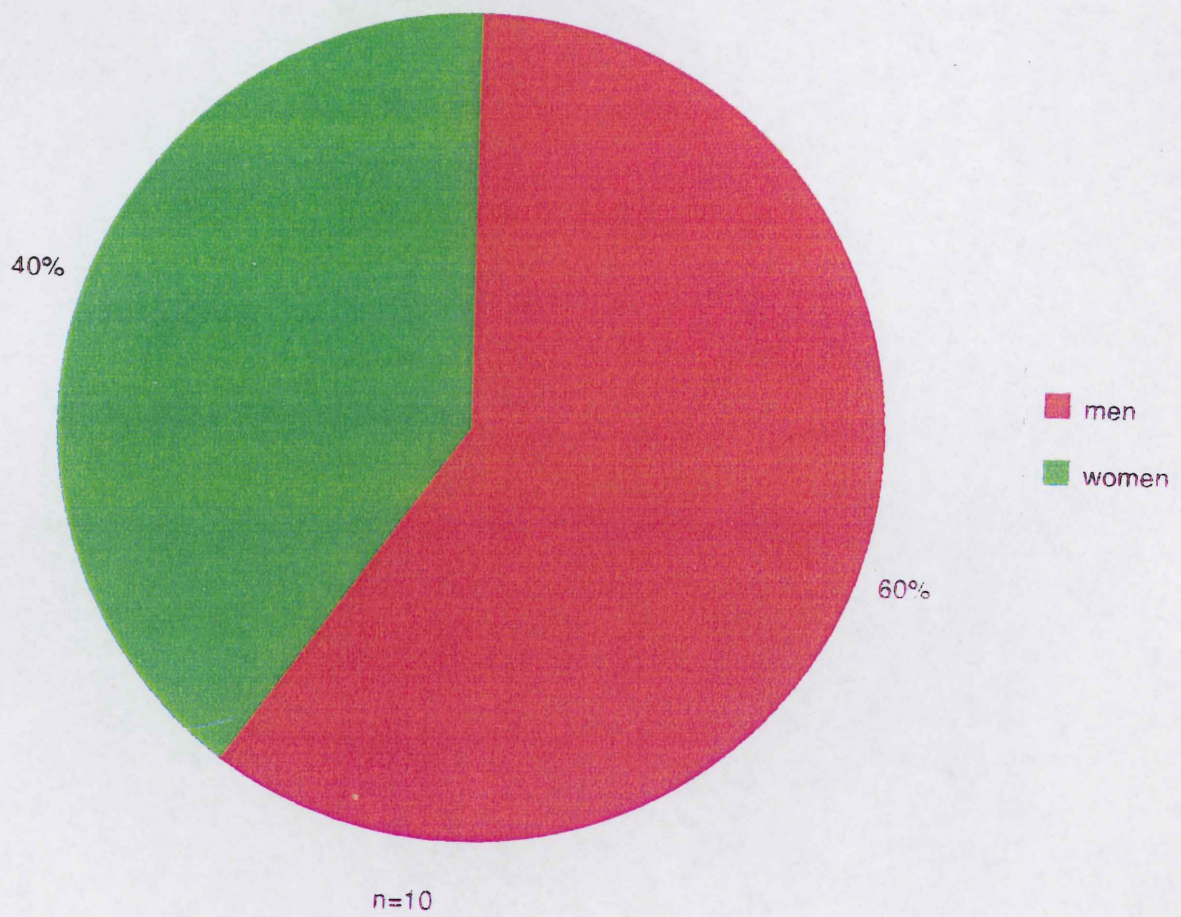
⁶ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.38

⁷ Dunn. RS "Sugar Production and Slave Women in Jamaica." Cultivation and Culture: Labour and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas. I.Berlin & PD Morgan (ed) University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1993. p.49

⁸ Dunn. RS "Sugar Production and Slave Women in Jamaica." p.50

FIGURE ONE

Thistlewood's Work Gang on Masemure Estate, 1768



in Jamaica he began to record details of diseases, treatments and local remedies. For example:

Col Barclay says putt hog=Plum Tree bark in a pott to boil with water till strong, then place it to Boil over gentle ffire, and keep Feet in it as hot as Can be bore ffor nine days and nights, and it will Effectually Cure the Crab yaws - yt he cures all his negroes so.⁹

Thistlewood's interest in cures for diseases, was not only because of his interest in the well being of the slaves, but also to assist him in diagnosing and treating his own health problems. The meticulous recording of his own symptoms and treatments, enabled him to identify complaints both in himself and in his slaves, and therefore treat them promptly and effectively.

Braithwaite has estimated that on a well run estate about sixty percent of the slaves were available for labour at any one time, and that the optimum working life of a slave was only about seven years.¹⁰ Thistlewood's careful records of those who were sick make it possible to test this estimation, by looking at a year and assessing the health of his slaves. (see Figs 2, 3 & 4) These show that in this particular year, 1769, in all months of the year, sixty percent or more of his adult slaves were working at any one time, although there are seasonal variations in health. When you break down the figures to look at each individual slave, you discover that only two slaves of the twenty two had more days away from the field than time spent in the labour gang. The overall comparison of men and women show that there are no great variations between men and women in their health levels, although it is interesting to note that included in the time away from the field for Abba, Nanny and Maria was time to look after a sick child or have a baby. It would seem that for this particular year, at least, Thistlewood's slaves in general worked to a greater capacity than the sixty percent productivity that Braithwaite suggests. To prove that this year was not

⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/3 Monday 6 January 1752. p.5

¹⁰ Braithwaite. E The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820.
Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971 p.153-154

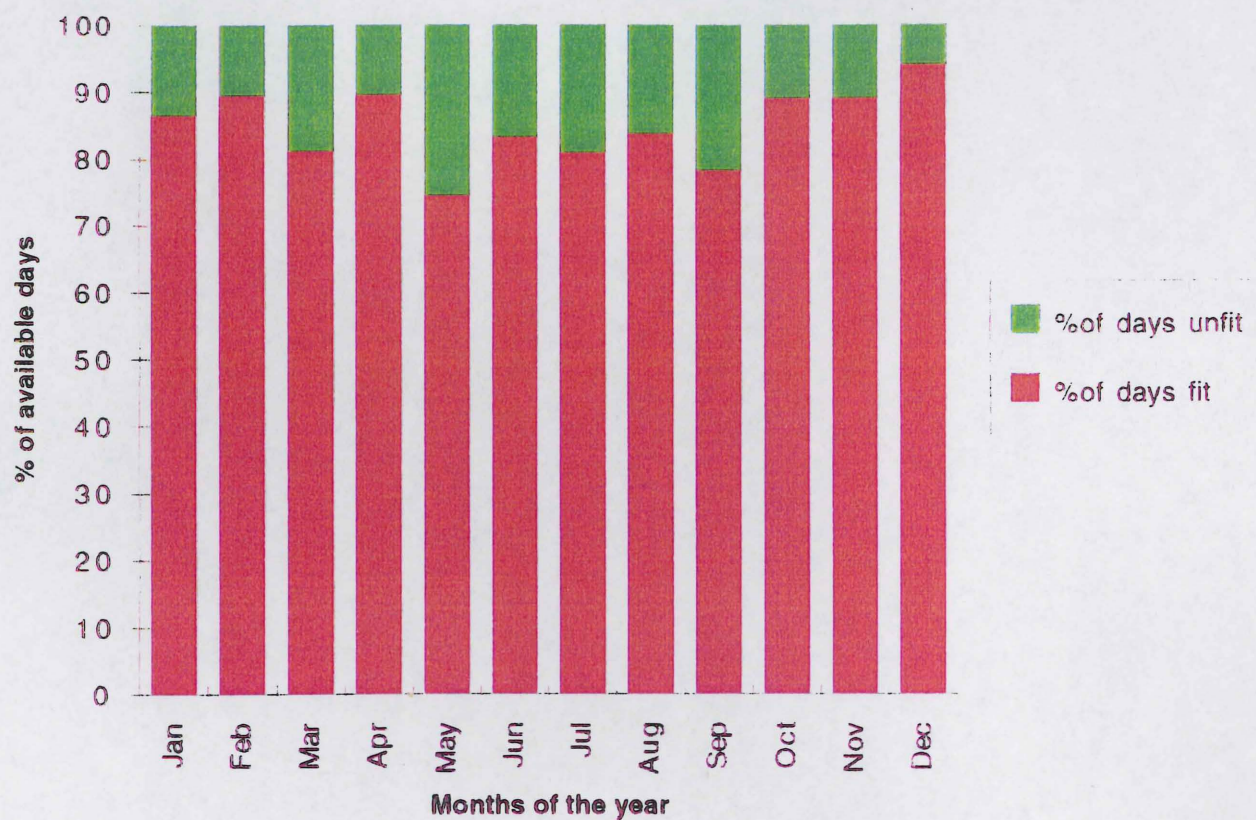
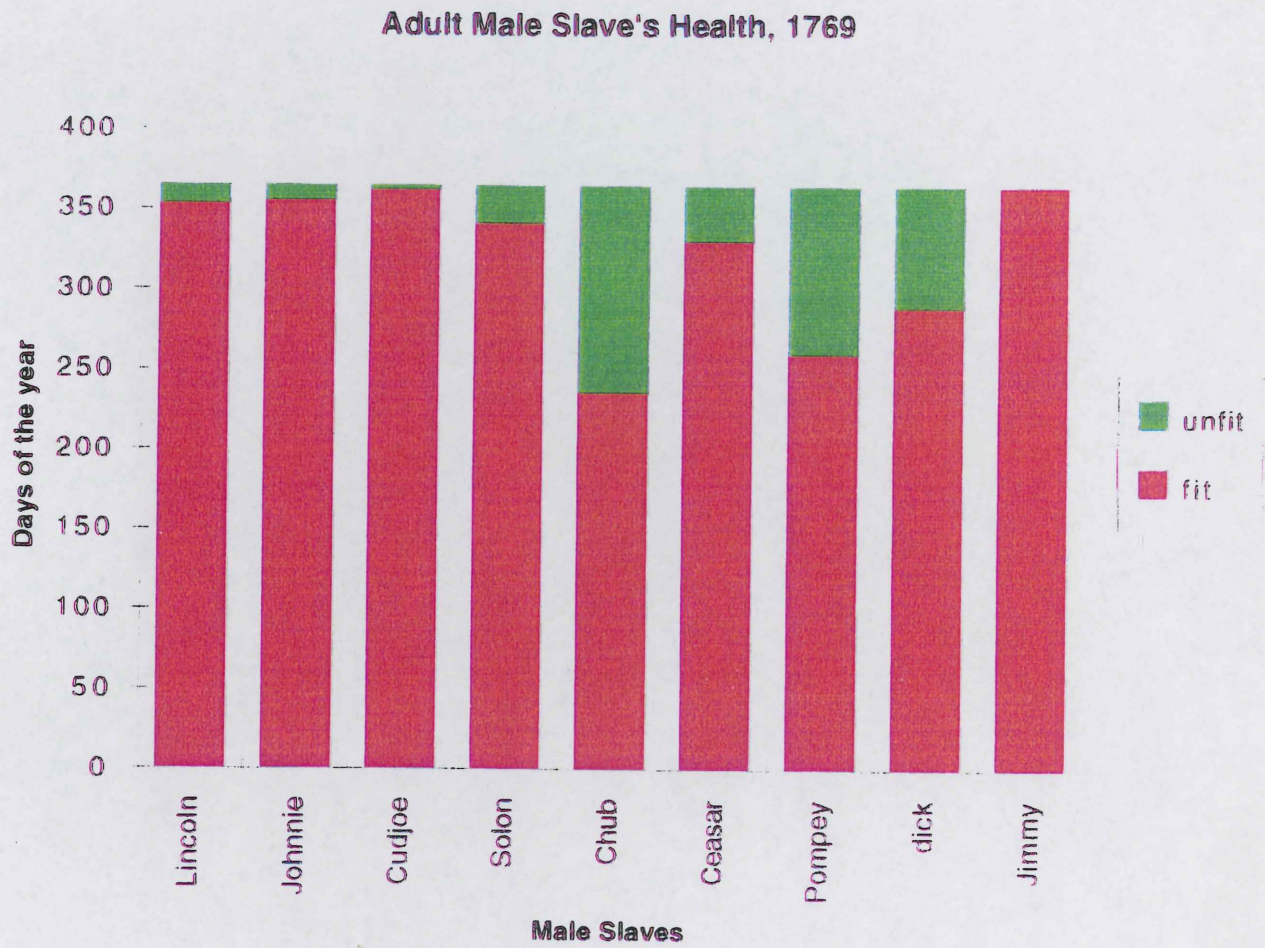
FIGURE 2**Fitness of Adult Slaves by Month, 1769.**

FIGURE 3

FIGURE 4



exceptional, however, one would need to collect data from other years. It is also possible that if you extended the data to include days on light duties away from the field, then the result may come closer to Braithwaite's estimation.

Slaves' productive lives were seldom uninterrupted by sickness, and they were involved in a cycle of health and work. If a slave was fully fit she/he worked in the main field gang. When the slave became sick or was injured, depending on the nature and severity of the complaint, the slave was put on lighter duties or complete rest. If complete rest in the hothouse was necessary, on return, the slave would begin on light duties until Thistlewood felt they were fit enough to return to the main gang. For example, in January 1768, Peggy, one of the field slaves fell to smallpox. Thistlewood first isolated her from the rest of the slaves and gave her complete rest attended by only one slave. By the beginning of March her progress was sufficient that she began light duties in the garden and house, but it was not until the end of April that she was deemed fit enough to return to the rest of the work gang employed at Masemure Estate.

The reproductive function of women gave them opportunities to have some time on light duties and away from field work when they were pregnant. The time that Thistlewood gave pregnant women away from the field is hard to assess, due to the sketchy nature of the records. It is likely, however, that release time for childbirth remained fairly standard throughout the years prior to him moving to the Penn. Thistlewood's record keeping in this matter appears to be incomplete, as he recorded a birth but not when the woman giving birth left or returned to work. For example, in September 1750 he records

Abt 10 att night dinah (adams wife) was brought to bed of a girl - call'd it Chrishia.¹¹

Then two weeks later he writes "to day Dinah first went into y^l: field again."¹² This suggests that she had no time off before hand, and only two weeks to recover. In October 1758, Dido was

¹¹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/1 Monday 20 September 1750 p.362

¹² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/1 Wednesday 3 October 1750 p.387

pregnant and Thistlewood records "dido laid up very big."¹³ Then eight days later

This morning about 1/2 past 6 O'clock, dido brought to bed off a girl.¹⁴

This suggests that Dido was given a week of rest before her birth, but there is no record of her return to work, except for references to her in the field gang in early 1759. In both these cases it is likely that non reporting on Thistlewood's part was significant and it is probable that Thistlewood kept a standard procedure when dealing with pregnant women, all having a minimum rest needed for them to work efficiently both before and after the birth. Slave women who had a close connection with Thistlewood appear to have been able to use it to manipulate him into giving them more time off. This can be seen in the experience of Mountain Lucy, a close friend of Phibbah's, and a favourite of Thistlewood, when she had her baby in 1761. On the 5th of July Thistlewood notes

Sent Mn Lucy to paradise, as she say's this month is for her, and begins to complain off her Belly¹⁵

It is not until the 27th of August that her baby was born, and not until the 23rd September that she returned home to Egypt from Paradise. Therefore, it would appear she was able to get much more time off to rest and care for her baby than Thistlewood allowed for other women. Thistlewood continued the practise of allowing very little time off for childbirth when he moved to the Penn. However, Thistlewood does seem to have introduced a system of light duties for women after the birth of a baby before they returned to the field, and time off seems to increase for women who suffered miscarriages. Studies of plantation records have shown that, in general, pregnancy did not guarantee lighter work or no punishment, and that the maximum time a slave woman could expect to receive was six weeks before and three weeks after the birth.¹⁶ As the slave trade drew to a close, and the supply of new slaves from Africa dried up, the reproductive capacity of slave women assumed a new

¹³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/9 Monday 9 October 1758 p.116

¹⁴ Thistlewood. T Monsoon 31/9 Tuesday 17 October 1758 p.121

¹⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12 Sunday 5 July 1761 p.173

¹⁶ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.44

importance, as they provided the only source of new recruits. The increased respect for the women's reproductive function led to the introduction of laws designed to offer some protection to mothers and their unborn children. This brought some leniency for pregnant women. The slave trade was still going strong throughout Thistlewood's life. Therefore, the availability of new slaves from Africa meant that protection of mothers and babies was not a high priority to Thistlewood.

Women who worked in field gangs were expected to perform the same work as did men. In spite of proving themselves capable and efficient workers in the field, however, they were never given any authority over other slaves in the field by promotion to the position of driver. These positions were almost entirely the exclusive domain of the male slave.¹⁷ This meant that in the field women were destined to be no more than drudges who were subject to the control and domination of not only the white man but also of a black man who acted as driver. Therefore, white men were prepared to see a woman as a capable worker as it suited their purposes to do so, but, they were unable to rid themselves of the European stereotype that characterised women as the weaker sex, unable to make decisions or hold a position of authority. This was certainly the case among Thistlewood's slaves. The position of driver, though often changing hands, was never given to a woman. This implies that while white men perceived race to be the most important element in the hierarchy of Jamaican society, gender was seen as an important division within the separate communities. It suggests they viewed slave men as the natural leaders of their own community. In doing this white men were assuming the slave community to emulate the gender roles that existed within their own community, where men were in charge and women were merely assistants.

¹⁷ Reddock, R "Women and the Slave Plantation Economy in the Caribbean." Retrieving Women's History: Changing Perspective's of Women in Politics and Society. Kleinberg, J (ed). Berg/UNESCO, Oxford, 1979. pp.105-133 p.109

There were limited options available to slaves in the area of production. Some slaves were able to escape the field through being selected, often as children, as tradesmen or domestics. While male slaves were chosen predominantly for the trades, women were very unlikely to gain a position as a master mechanic, such as a carpenter, mason or coopersmith. Positions as tradesmen were highly regarded by the slaves, not only because it meant escape from the field, but because they also had greater freedom of movement because they were encouraged to go off the plantation to jobs in surrounding districts.¹⁸ To have learnt a trade also gave the slave the ability to use his/her skills to make money for herself or himself, thus creating independent wealth to improve their lifestyle. Thus women's opportunities were severely disadvantaged economically.

One way that slave women could gain a degree of freedom to move around the district, like the master mechanics, was through becoming a sales rep or "huckster" for the master. These women sold his products for him in the surrounding area, or managed a shop in his name.¹⁹ Thistlewood used slaves not only to run messages for him, but to carry products to buy, sell and exchange throughout the district. While he used both sexes to run these errands, women were predominant in the area of selling produce grown, and game shot by Thistlewood. The reason women predominated is probably because of gender assumptions that portrayed women as less devious and more docile and trustworthy than men, and therefore, less likely to steal from him. It was also possible that because of the association with women and shopping that trading was marked as a feminine activity. The West African tradition also dictated that women were the chief marketers, and therefore, the women already had skills in this area. These women went door to door, and sold on his behalf in the markets. These huckster women became increasingly important to Thistlewood and they became a vital cog in Thistlewood's commercial success, due to his increasing

¹⁸ Braithwaite. E The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820.
p.155

¹⁹ Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels p.79

reliance upon the sale of produce and game for his livelihood. As an overseer the work that these women did on his behalf was important as it enabled him to earn above and beyond his salary, and therefore save faster to gain his own property. Once on the Penn, however, they assumed even greater importance as it was not sugar, but produce which Thistlewood was reliant on selling to make his estate a profitable enterprise.

To be a huckster gave slave women three advantages. The first was that in order to sell their products, they had great freedom of movement throughout the district. This enabled them to pass information between estates, and establish and retain contacts on the other estates. On the Penn, Franke and Damsel did most of the huckstering for Thistlewood. Both of these women had husbands at Egypt, and their position allowed them to visit them on a regular basis. The second advantage lay in the way Thistlewood rewarded good sales with a share in the profits. This enabled these women to accumulate capital of their own, that improved their position more quickly than if they were reliant solely on their provisions ground to make a living. The third advantage to the women would have been that through the knowledge and skills they developed from selling Thistlewood's goods, they would have been better equipped to sell the produce from their own provision grounds. This would have further enhanced their ability to earn money and improve their standard of living.

The other avenue open to women to escape from the field, was to enter the "house" as a domestic servant. This area was almost the exclusive domain of female slaves. While women working in the field were expected to perform "masculine" tasks, men were rarely expected to fulfil "female" ones in the house.²⁰ This suggests that there was some recognition, by whites, of gender roles within the slave community. While they were prepared to see field work, except for positions of authority, as genderless, once out of the field slaves were required to conform to

²⁰ Hooks. B Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism. Pluto Press, London, 1986. p.22-3

European gender role expectations and as such women worked in the house while men learnt trades.

The principal slave authority figure in the house was always a woman, usually the housekeeper, and these women reached a status comparable to the driver in the field.²¹ It was common for the housekeeper to be a mistress of the white man, thus increasing the power of her position. These women had the ability not only to influence the slaves under them, but often the master who ruled over them. Phibbah became Thistlewood's housekeeper at the Penn, and this helped her consolidate her position both within Thistlewood's life and the slave community.

On Egypt, and other larger plantations there were several domestic staff, ranging from cleaners to washerwomen, seamstresses to footmen. These positions, as with artisans operated on an apprenticeship system, with the new learning from the old. To see how this system operated we can follow the history of one of Thistlewood's slaves, Abba. She was purchased by Thistlewood in February 1758 from John Parkingson, Thistlewood does not specify her age, but called her a girl. He paid £46 for her.²² There is no mention of what task she was allocated at first, but the fact that she was put to sleep in the cookroom suggests it was around the house. In July 1758 her apprenticeship training began in earnest, when Thistlewood had her sent to Mrs Emetson's.

*had my Abba to Mrs Emetson, to learn to Wash, etc in about 2 years, And I am to give Ten pounds: to be paid at taking her away²³

She must have learnt her chores well, and become an asset to Mrs Emetson, as she refused Thistlewood's money for her training.

Mrs Emetson would not take the Ten Pounds for Abba's learning According to the agreement but made me a present off it²⁴

²¹ Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels p.55

²² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/9 Tuesday 21 February 1758 p.13

²³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/9 Monday 17 July 1758 p.70

²⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12 Tuesday 5 May 1761 p.108

Soon after this, however, Mrs Emetson died and Abba returned to Egypt for a short while and was hired out by Thistlewood on a casual basis, until August 1761 when she was hired out to Mr Samuel Lee. This time she was a source of income, not a liability, to Thistlewood.

She (Abba) is now hired to Mr Samuel Lee at £14 pr: annum. Neptune at Mr Emetson's is her husband, and it is said she is with child.²⁵

Abba remained at Mr Lee's with her growing number of children until 1767 when she and her children moved to the Penn, where she became the chief domestic slave, with special responsibility over laundry. Soon she was second in importance to Phibbah in the running of the house. By this stage she had come of age in her position and was assisting in the apprenticeship of young domestic slaves. For example, in 1767 Thistlewood noted:

Silvia here today, learning off abba to iron clothes.²⁶

The position of the women within the house was, however, delicately poised and at the first hint of suspected neglect or misconduct they could be sent back to work in the fields.²⁷ This happened frequently to the women at Egypt. They were often reinstated, presumably when it was deemed they had learned their lesson. This appears to be the case with this particular domestic

Recd a Note ffrom mr Cope pr: Mirtilla, with her 2 Mulatto and one Negro Child, She having disoblged Mrs cope, is sent to work in Egypt Field.²⁸

A month later, however, Thistlewood reports that, "mirtilla went to paradise again by mr Cope's order."²⁹

On small estates, however, the distinction between domestic and field slaves was less clear. Often it related to the age of the slaves, with slaves working in and around the house when young, in the field in their prime, and back to the house in their older

²⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12 Monday 17 August 1761 p.203

²⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/18 Friday 4 September 1767 p.216

²⁷ Braithwaite. E The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820.
p.155

²⁸ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12 Sunday 25 July 1761 p.189

²⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12 Monday 24 August 1761 p.210

years.³⁰ Thistlewood had one permanent domestic slave, Abba. The rest entered and left the house according to age, but also according to health and other production requirements. Slaves of both sexes often spent time in the house when they were recovering from illness or injury, and the numbers also increased at agriculturally non productive times.

Throughout the slave hierarchy among Thistlewood's estate, and others in Jamaica, there was a distinct correlation between colour and status. The lighter the slave's skin the greater the chance that the slave would escape from the field. For example, domestic staff were commonly not only mulatto, but were also commonly a relative of the previous housekeeper, thus creating a class, or family above the rest.³¹ For example, Phibbah's daughter Coobah was also a domestic servant of some importance and even travelled to Britain to accompany Dorrill Cope. This suggests that family connections were important in gaining a position away from the field. This would indicate that some slaves, no matter how hard they tried to prove themselves, were never going to advance beyond the status of field slave. This led to the elevation of status of mixed race people, within the slave community, not only through master's imposition, but due to the position of power or material gain they were able to create for themselves and they were able to command respect and fear amongst the other slaves.³²

Historians generally believe that while the house may have brought escape from the backbreaking work of the field it was often a double edged sword because it meant that the women became dependent on the whites due to their close proximity to the master. The closeness between domestics and their masters opened the domestics to a greater level of sexual exploitation, and exposed them to the sadistic whims and devices of frustrated owners who could lash out at any time upon these

³⁰ Braithwaite. E The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820.
p.156

³¹ Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels p.58

³² Patterson. O The Sociology of Slavery. London, 1967 p.64

workers³³ Domestic slaves may have gained food, clothing and shelter; in exchange they had to accept the language and office of obedience. These women often found themselves in a materially superior position, but to gain it they were sexually regulated and ethnically separated from their own community. This created a complicated position for them within both the racial and sexual hierarchies³⁴

These statements are not borne out in Thistlewood's diary. While it was true that domestic slaves had closer contact with the whites than the field slaves, they do not appear to have lost their contact with the slave community in the way many commentators suggest. They were not constantly physically isolated from the other slaves. There was, for example, a flexibility in accommodation. While some slaves slept in the house, most also had a hut in the slave compound. This enabled them to move between the two according to convenience and desire. For example, Abba, the head domestic at the Penn, was the first slave to have a hut allocated to her when Thistlewood moved to the Penn in 1767, and there are references to Phibbah having a hut in the slave village, as well as sleeping in the cookroom. It appears that, instead of being separated from the field slaves by their position, domestic slaves were respected and admired for their privileges. This may have been more a credit to the individual personalities of the women involved, rather than a generalisation that could be applied to wider Jamaican society. The group of powerful domestics in Thistlewood's life appear to have used their position to attempt to influence him and other whites to create better conditions for their fellow slaves, rather than snub them. They intervened on their behalf and tempered Thistlewood's behaviour on many occasions, such as "At the Intrusion of Egypt Lucy, etc, took off London's chains."³⁵

³³ Braithwaite. E The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820
p.156

³⁴ Barash. C "The Character of Difference: The Creole Woman as Cultural Mediator in Narratives about Jamaica." Eighteenth Century Studies. 23. 1990 pp.407-423 p.414

³⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12 Thursday 14 May 1761. p.123

Slaves from all areas of production resisted Thistlewood's wishes at one time or another. The close personal relationship that domestics had with their masters has often led to suggestions that they were more likely to defend rather than resist their masters. Contemporaries, however, were aware that domestics were in an ideal position to sabotage the master through poison or stealing from him. That Thistlewood was aware of this is clear in 1752, after he was attacked by Congo Sam. He was clearly shaken, and recalls another recent incident which he considered threatening

Note! last Friday, in yl: Field, Quashe told me (beffore all yl: Negroes) yt: I should not eat much more here! I asking if he meant to poison or murder me, after a pause he reply'd neither. . .³⁶

This incident seems to be relatively isolated, and it was at the beginning of Thistlewood's time at Egypt while he was still finding his feet. From this time on, apart from perpetual problems with stealing, he developed an amicable relationship with his domestics. These women become his entree into the world of the slaves, becoming regular associates of Thistlewood. This was not the case for all Jamaican masters and there is evidence to show that, in slave uprisings domestics, far from being placid bystanders, were often at the forefront of rebellion. For example, in 1776 the planned insurrection in Hanover parish was led by skilled slaves and domestic slaves, who were in a trusted position and tampered with their master's weapons and committed other acts of sabotage.³⁷ The plot was discovered before it was executed, but it showed that domestic slaves could turn against their master and lead a revolt against them.

Field slaves were more likely to resist by shirking work, feigning sickness, working carelessly, and damaging crops and tools. Thistlewood complains regularly about all these activities, and despite his best efforts to coerce the slaves into complying with his wishes, often through severe punishments,

³⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/3 27 December 1752 p.250

³⁷ Sheridan. R B "The Jamaican Insurrection Scare of 1776 and the American Revolution." Journal of Negro History. vol ?. pp.290-308 p.303

they continued to disrupt his plans in small ways. This kind of behaviour was common in eighteenth century Jamaica and contemporary writers often interpreted it, at least publicly, as laziness and stupidity, which in turn created a justification for their own behaviour as they made slaves seem incapable of organising their own affairs. Thistlewood rarely attempts to explain the actions of his slaves, but he does not appear to consider the slaves to be inherently lazy and in need of constant supervision. This is shown when he was willing to let his slaves work the Penn for many months without constant supervision. However, when he comments on his dissatisfaction with work progress, he attributes it to laziness, and not health or tough work assignments.

went to the Penn took Job with me, with a whip flogg'd
Lincoln and every one of the field Negroes for impudence
and laziness &c.³⁸

Slaves proved that, far from being incapable of organising their own affairs, they could not only organise but make great gains for themselves through their provision grounds and huckstering. This is shown through many of Thistlewood's slaves owning livestock and fowl. The contrast in attitudes towards the two types of work that slaves performed must have been enormous.³⁹ This was because these types of work were done on their own behalf for their own benefit, and not for the benefit of their master.

The provision grounds, that Thistlewood and other Jamaicans provided for their slaves, operated on a contractual arrangement. Instead of masters giving slaves a weekly dole out of provisions, slaves grew their own food in exchange for time off.⁴⁰ This existing practice was codified into Jamaican law, with the Consolidated Slave Act of 1786 and subsequent amendment, which stated that every fortnight, except at crop time, the

³⁸ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/18. Wednesday 29 July 1767 p.186

³⁹ Richardson. B The Caribbean in the Wider World 1492-1992: A Regional Geography. Cambridge University Press. New York. 1992 p.68

⁴⁰ Craton. M "Changing Patterns of Slave Families in the British West Indies." p.34

slaves were to have one day exclusive of Sunday and Public holidays in which to cultivate their crops.⁴¹ Despite this law that provided time for slaves to work their provision grounds occurring after Thistlewood's time, he regularly made Saturdays available for his slaves to work on their grounds.

Slaves became very successful at managing their provision grounds and created a surplus which they sold at markets. The slaves were given almost unlimited management authority over their grounds,⁴² and this provided them with an opportunity to create not only some autonomy over their lives, but also sponsored collective discipline and self esteem through reaping the benefits of their own production.⁴³

The provision grounds were not designed with this intention in mind by the whites who created them. They were designed as a way of increasing profits by reducing the cost of the slaves' upkeep. In keeping with this philosophy the land made available was on the margins of the estate, unsuitable for cultivation. As Thistlewood describes when visiting an associate in 1780

. . . mr duncan and me rode to his farm side, very good ride, then alighted, and walked, crept, climbed etc through his provision grounds a terrible road, and a long way and some of it exceeding rocky and steep⁴⁴

Provision grounds were also largely cultivated in the slave's own time which meant there was no drain on the labour of the estate. Thistlewood and others recognised the importance the slaves placed on the time they had available to work their grounds, and were not averse to removing the privilege as punishment.

Nigroes d: ffor as they work so very badly and are so very full off tricks do not give them to day. x gave Peggy today⁴⁵

⁴¹ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.47

⁴² Green. C "Gender and Re/Production in British West Indian Slave Societies, Part 1: Reclaiming Women's Lives." Against the Current. Sept/Oct 1992. pp.31-37 p.36

⁴³ Morgan. P D "Work Culture: ThTask System and the World of the Low Country Blacks, 1700 to 1880." William and Mary Quarterly. 3rd Ser. Vol XXXIX. no 4. Oct 1982. pp.563-599. p.597

⁴⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/31 Thursday 20 July 1780. p.112

⁴⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Saturday 9 September 1769 p.158

Provision grounds were not unique to the West Indies, but were developed for different reasons in the American South. In the American South they developed as a response to the time slaves had available under the task system of labour. The speed with which the slaves could complete their allotted tasks influenced the amount of time they had to work on their own behalf, rations were still allocated, therefore the provision ground earnings were a bonus.⁴⁶ This contrasted with the West Indies where provision grounds were developed not only for slaves to grow their own food to supplement their diet, but also as a source of provisions to the free population due to the lack of diversification of activity among the free community.⁴⁷ In this way provision grounds could provide a convenient escape for masters who could not afford to feed their slaves, through crop failure, from either natural causes or bad management. Thistlewood used them extensively as a means of providing for his slaves, and saw them as a good alternative to giving them extensive rations. In 1770 Thistlewood regularly gave his carpenter, Cumberland a day off to go and work on his own behalf, instead of paying him the money to which he was entitled.⁴⁸ In 1780 a great hurricane hit Jamaica and virtually decimated crops, buildings and livestock, ruining many residents. Thistlewood's reaction to the problem of resources was to put his slaves to work on their provision grounds as soon as the danger was over, in order to decrease the inevitable need for increased hand outs with a limited income to work with.

While the diary tells us little about the internal organisation and attitudes of the slaves towards the provision grounds, other studies show that the internal organisation of provision grounds contained West African notions of property ownership⁴⁹, and organisation of production.⁵⁰ In West African structures,

⁴⁶ Morgan. P D "Work and Culture." pp.563-599

⁴⁷ Morgan. P D "Work and Culture p.597

⁴⁸ This begins on 7th April 1770. p.54

⁴⁹ Mullin. M Africans in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831. University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1992 p.160

⁵⁰ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.47

property is seen as being corporate, belonging both to the living and the dead.⁵¹ This differs from the white methods of property transfer which were based on primogeniture, or the eldest son gaining the bulk of the estate, not the kin group as a whole. Slaves used the West African notion to develop a philosophy that it was their right to pass on their plots to members of their kin groups, although technically the land belonged to the white master. The extent to which the slaves believed in their ownership of the plots is shown by relations from other plantations coming forward to claim their inheritance on the death of a family member.⁵² Masters appear to have respected the right of slaves to engage in this type of activity, and allowed its practice to continue. To do so advantaged the masters as it created some stability as slaves were given a stake in the system and customary rights which once gained they were reluctant to give up.

The way in which Thistlewood distributed the provision grounds amongst his slaves is never explicitly explained. In 1770 he distributed the grounds thus

This morning shared the lime kiln provision ground amongst my negroes they struck a line from the south most site p=0 to a young alligator pear tree in abbas line /abbas ground remains the same, beginning at the stake, south side
 1. Jimmy, damsel, bess & Sally 2. Lincoln & Sukey 3. Solon & maria 4. dick & mirtilla 5. Franke & phoebe - north side returning 6. peggy 7. cudjoe and chub 8. nanny 9. Caesar 10. Coobah & pompey - gave the negroes the rest of today, and tomorrow to plant and put their grounds in order⁵³

Clearly some are family groups, such as Abba and her children, and some are likely to be "married" couples such as Lincoln and Sukey, but it is hard to assess how the rest have been allocated. It could have been arbitrary, or based on shipmates, country of origin, or similar circumstance.

⁵¹ Mullin. M Africans in America p.160

⁵² Green. C "Gender and Re/Production in West Indian Slave Societies, Part 1." p.37

⁵³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/21 Friday 19 October 1770 p.186

After the master distributed the provision ground, the internal organisation was largely left up to the slaves who worked them as individuals and family groups. The distance to the grounds and the limited time slaves had for the work on them meant a division of labour based on gender emerged.⁵⁴ The roles undertaken were consistent with their West African heritage in which women made significant contributions to food production, and were able to develop a degree of independence through marketing. Women took these skills to Jamaica, both women and men worked the provision grounds, and women became prominent as market sellers and commercial intermediaries.⁵⁵ To divide the labour between harvesting and selling meant that time could be spent efficiently, instead of using all the available hours travelling. Women became the marketers or hucksters because it was consistent with other female roles, such as childcare. That women were largely concerned with the marketing side of the provision grounds is corroborated in Thistlewood's diary, as most of his business transactions with the slave community are with female slaves. Thistlewood's initiation into the internal economic workings of Jamaica began in the very early days. For example, his first economic transaction, is with a female slave on the 19th May 1750 when he bought some clothes from a slave woman.⁵⁶

The diary does give us some indication of how his slaves created a livelihood for themselves out of their provision grounds. Thistlewood set the slaves to clear the land and plant root crops that were basic to all grounds before he allocated the exact grounds to each individual. On top of these staple crops it is clear that many grew vegetables and flowers, both for their own use and sale. A number of the slaves also had livestock ranging from pigs and goats, to a small number of horses. The references in the diary to these animals is when they break away and wreak havoc in Thistlewood's garden or the provision grounds.

⁵⁴ McDonald. R A The Economy and Material Culture of the Slaves: Goods and Chattels on the Sugar Plantations of Jamaica and Louisiana. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1993. p.26

⁵⁵ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.49

⁵⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/1 Saturday 19 May 1750. p.300

Kirkpatrick Quasheba cow in my provision ground this morning and had eat up a good deal of my corn, than which I never saw finer, etc. Shot at her legs with a ball, but missed them.⁵⁷

From Thistlewood's diary it also seems evident that some slaves ran hens and other fowl, both for sale and consumption of both birds and eggs. The references to these, once again, are when the birds made a nuisance of themselves, or when Thistlewood bought and sold them with his slaves.

In addition to livestock and produce slaves used free time to hunt, fish and gather items to supplement their diet or provide for their master's table. Women were involved in this type of activity, and were paid a reasonable sum by Thistlewood for their wares. For example in 1780 Thistlewood noted

To Peggy for 11 crabbs 2 bitts, by way of assisting her.⁵⁸

The slaves who had a trade or a domestic skill put them to use to make extra money. The women who worked in the house used especially their laundry and sewing skills to their own advantage. Thistlewood was willing to pay women for extra services of this nature, especially in the early years when he had no specific slave assigned to him for these duties.

To Phibbah for mending me 4 pr: Stockings and Making a wallet 3 Bitts⁵⁹

It would appear that most slaves were able to profit from economic activity, and trade flourished both within the slave community and between the slave and white communities.

The result of this activity was that slaves came to dominate the internal markets of Jamaica and the white community came to rely on them for a substantial portion of their food supplies.⁶⁰ In this way trade became one of the most important contact between the two communities. Women, as principal hucksters, therefore, became the link commercially between the white and

⁵⁷ Thistlewood. T Monsoon 31/20 Monday 26 June 1769 p.113

⁵⁸ Thistlewood. T Monsoon 31/31 Sunday 12 November 1780 p.183

⁵⁹ Thistlewood. T Monsoon 31/4 Friday 26 January 1753 p.17

⁶⁰ Green. C "Gender and Re?Production in British West Indian Slave Societies, Part 1." p.37

slave community in a more direct way than did their male counterparts. This development was mirrored in other West Indian islands. In Barbados, women also dominated the internal market and were able to establish themselves as semi-autonomous units that sought to aggressively project themselves onto the market.⁶¹ During the eighteenth century the Barbadian white community felt so threatened by these women, that they attempted to introduce bills to limit their movement, but they all failed.⁶²

The success of the provision grounds and domination of the internal markets not only created a positive economic position for slaves, but but also allowed them to move around the island. Sunday markets became the centre of internal trade, and, while they began as a convenient concession, by planters, attendance became a fiercely guarded customary right by slaves. Planters acknowledged this customary right in most circumstances.⁶³ Thistlewood, and the rest of the white community, recognised the importance of these markets to their slaves, and would deliberately punish slaves by putting them in the bilboes or locking them in the cooler on Sundays to prevent them from attending. The importance of these markets to the running of the economy can be seen in 1760. During Tackey's Rebellion, a potentially dangerous time for masters to let their slaves wander the neighbourhood Thistlewood issued thirty tickets to let his slaves attend and buy and sell provisions.⁶⁴

The Sunday markets provided an opportunity for slaves to congregate in large groups on a legitimate basis, and they became a place where slaves from neighbouring plantations could meet and communicate with each other with relative impunity.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels p.75

⁶² Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels p.77

⁶³ Green. C "Gender and Re?Production in British West Indian Slave Societies, Part 1." p.36

⁶⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/11 Sunday 1 June 1760 p.103 & Sunday 8 June 1760 p.107

⁶⁵ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.49

As the majority of the hucksters were women, women predominated in the Sunday markets. Whites, therefore, felt less threatened by them than if men had predominated. This was because women were generally perceived as less likely to incite rebellion.

Of the five types of huckster that Beckles delineates three sold on their own behalf.⁶⁶ These were plantation field women who sold items raised in their garden to individual consumers in town or country, field women who sold their produce directly to other hucksters or retail shops, and hucksters who sold sweets and drinks on the street corner.⁶⁷ Although Thistlewood does not give us details of the women's activities in the market place, it is probably safe to assume that women from his estate engaged, to some extent, in all three activities.

The reliance of the white community on the slave markets for provisions meant that slaves also accumulated an impressive proportion of the locally circulating coin currency as a regular means of exchange and savings. This meant they were able to participate in the market of imported goods.⁶⁸ This was especially true of domestic slaves, who not only had closer contact with whites, but also had skills as well as produce to sell as a way of earning income. Phibbah was a woman of means. She not only owned a horse, pigs and fowl, she had much ready money, which she was frequently lending to Thistlewood. In February 1769 he records "borrowed £12 off Phibbah"⁶⁹, and later that same year notes

Returned to Phibbah £27:2:6, money I borrowed off her . . .
out of her own, house Franke and Egypt Lucy's money.⁷⁰

This amount of money would have been enough for the purchase of a girl or boy slave. This suggests that not only Phibbah, but

⁶⁶ The other two types of huckster involved the women selling on behalf of their master and are discussed on p.8 of this chapter

⁶⁷ Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels p.79

⁶⁸ Green. C "Gender and Re?Production in British West Indian Slave Societies, Part 1." p.37

⁶⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Wednesday 29 February 1769 p.36

⁷⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Sunday 3 September 1769 p.153

other women of her status were able to gain ready money in reasonable quantities.

There is also some evidence that more slaves were able to free themselves than actually did, but chose to remain in bondage.⁷¹ This may seem strange to a twentieth century observer, but for slaves to become free they lost the customary rights and limited freedom they had gained, as well as the bonds of kinship and community that were found within the slave groups. To be free, therefore, meant to expose oneself to the risks and vulnerabilities of the unknown dangers that were the freedman's lot.⁷²

One of the most important functions of a female slave was her ability to perform well within the productive unit. To this end Thistlewood bought slaves he felt would help him achieve his goal of maximising profit, and carefully monitored the health of his slaves. Most female slaves worked as field hands, but a few escaped by selling products throughout the district or becoming a domestic. The number of positions that women could achieve which enabled freedom of movement or authority were limited. Slaves also worked on their own behalf in their provision grounds. In this area they were successful in creating a surplus which they sold in the local district, largely through the Sunday Markets. The success of the provision grounds enabled slaves to build a material base for themselves and in so doing they created an area of autonomy and a basis for self esteem that they would otherwise not have been able to do. While all slaves worked the provision grounds, women predominated in the marketing or huckster side of the enterprise. This led women to have a more direct interaction with the white community than the male slaves who generally concentrated on tending the plot. The competence of the women as sellers meant that they were more than capable of competing with whites for a market share, and

⁷¹ Green. C "Gender and Re?Production in British West Indian Slave Societies, Part 1." p.37

⁷² Green. C "Gender and Re?Production in British West Indian Slave Societies, Part 1." p.37

during the late eighteenth century the slaves dominated the internal market system.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE FUNCTION

The second major area of contact between white men and black women was sexual contacts. Gender issues were at the centre of the sexual exploitation of slaves. While male slaves were relatively free from this type of exploitation, a master could assert his power over a female slave by reducing her to the level of a biological being through taking her as a sexual partner.¹ Female slaves were constantly aware of their sexual vulnerability, and lived in perpetual fear that men of both races might single them out for assault and victimisation.² At the same time, however, slave women recognised that if they relented to their master's demands that there were advantages to be gained in both the short and long term. In this way slave women were able to turn their exploitation to their advantage, and from it gain power and resources that were available to men only in a limited way.

The other area that set women apart from slave men was their ability to reproduce. In many ways slave women's reproductive function was a double edged sword, because while children might bring happiness to their parents, it also gave the master new productive units. Motherhood in the slave community added to the burdens women already faced, with few concessions made for pregnancy or family responsibility. Women, however, could turn these burdens around and use their fertility in a way that could be advantageous. The sexual exploitation of slave women combined with women's ability to produce future workers established a separate set of circumstances to those of their male counterparts.

This chapter will address these issues by examining Thistlewood's sexual exploitation of his slave women, in an attempt to determine whether women suffered or gained as a

¹ Davies. A "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves." Massachusetts Review.13, Winter 1972. pp.81-103 p.96

² Hooks. B Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism. Pluto Press, London, 1986. p.24

result of these encounters. Second, it will look at the reproductive function of his female slaves and look at how this influenced women's lives and women's relationships with Thistlewood.

Thistlewood had a purely functional approach to analysing his own sex life. He kept close and detailed records of his sexual encounters, so it is possible to make some analysis of the factual data of with whom, and, when sexual acts occurred. What we are unable to accurately assess is the impact these acts had upon the slave women involved, or to what extent the acts were consensual or forced. The accounts that Thistlewood gives of the behaviour of some of his associates, does, however, suggest that many sexual acts were forced and not consensual. Thistlewood less fully documents his slaves' reproductive lives. He does, however, appear to keep records of most births, if not details of the pregnancy, delivery or post natal condition of women. The statements Thistlewood does make allow us to draw some conclusions relating to the state of fertility among the female slaves in his care, and his attitude towards their reproductive function.

Thistlewood and other white men in Jamaica assumed that female slaves were always available to them to use for sexual conquest. This can be seen not only in the actions of Thistlewood, who had sexual relations with a large number of women under his charge, but, also, in the actions of his acquaintances, particularly his employer, John Cope, who frequently came to Egypt with his friends and demanded the company of slave women, regardless of the time of day or night.

Some time in the middle of last Night, Mr Cope come home, and Mr McDonald with him, they sat drinking for some time, then went to bed, mr McDonald had Eve to whom he gave 6 Bitts, and Mr Cope made Tom fetch Beck from the Negroes house for himself, with whom he was till Morning.³

White owners wanted female slaves to passively accept their sexual exploitation as the right and privilege of power. Accordingly, those who submitted willingly to sexual advances

³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/7 Sunday 2 May 1756 p.79

and received payments were being rewarded for their acceptance of the existing social order and those who refused were punished.⁴ In an article about women's culture and power, a group of French historians suggested the behaviour of women who willingly submitted to male domination, in this case sexual exploitation, was not passive acceptance. It was a recognition by the slave women that to comply with the men's wishes brought compensation and reward, which were otherwise difficult to obtain.⁵

Thistlewood normally rewarded the female slaves with whom he had sexual encounters with money or sometimes with food rations or rum. There is also evidence that he used sexual favours as an alternative to punishment. For example, in 1770 after Sally had run away and, been found, he records that he did not punish her but instead had a sexual encounter with her.⁶ The evidence is scarce as to whether he punished women who refused him, as he does not record refusals in his diary. He does, however, record two female slaves being punished by John Cope for refusing to come to stay with him and his friends.

PM Eg:t Susannah & Mazarine whipped for refusal last Saturday night, by Mr Cope's order.⁷

Sexual subordination of the female slave, therefore, represented a natural extension of the general power that white had over black, and the sex act became "a ritualistic re enactment of the daily pattern of social dominance."⁸ White men could exert their power over slave women's bodies with relative impunity as the women were powerless to refuse, and slave men were unable to prevent it from happening. In this way rape of a slave woman was not exclusively an attack upon the women, but, was indirectly an attack on the whole slave community. Black men's

⁴ Hooks. B Ain't I A Woman p.27

⁵ Dauphin. C et al "Women's Culture and Women's Power: An Attempt at Historiography." Journal of Women's History. vol1. no1. Spring 1989. pp.75-78

⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/21 Tuesday 7 August 1770 p.129

⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/7 Wednesday 5 May 1756 p.81

⁸ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. Heinemann Publishers and Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1990. p.111

authority was challenged by the sexual exploitation of their women. In selecting a woman to have a sexual encounter with, white men often paid little regard to any relationship that a woman might have with another slave. For example, in 1767 Thistlewood acknowledges that his slave Mirtilla was matched with driver Johnnie at Egypt⁹. However, in that same year Thistlewood took Mirtilla three times. The slave men's instincts would have told them to protect their female relatives and friends. However, the threat of severe punishments would have frustrated any efforts made by them to protect their wife, mother, sister or daughter.¹⁰ This would have caused tension not only between white and black men, but also between slave women and men, and women would have resented the fact that their menfolk were powerless to help. This would have caused tension between the sexes and driven a wedge between the two.

To justify their exploitative behaviour towards female slaves white men used the existing sexual stereotypes that denigrated slave women by portraying them as immoral and licentious.¹¹ This, combined with a lack of respect that whites had for slave marriages, provided a suitable rationale for sexual exploitation.¹² Many commentators of the time believed women were always amenable to the sexual advances of white men, and, therefore, blamed the women themselves for their own exploitation. This was the sentiment Janet Schaw voiced when she visited Antigua in 1774 and 1775

The young black wenches lay themselves out for white lovers, in which they are but too successful. This prevents their marrying with their natural mates, and hence a spurious and degenerate breed, neither so fit for the field, nor indeed any work, as the true breed negro.¹³

However, Thistlewood does not seem to ascribe to the philosophy of inherent differences between the races as the diary seems to

⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/18 15 December 1767

¹⁰ Davies. A Op cit p.97

¹¹ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.12

¹² Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.110

¹³ Bohls. E "The Aesthetics of Colonialism: Janet Schaw in the West Indies, 1774-1775." Eighteenth Century Studies. 27.3.1994. pp.363-390. p.383

be relatively free of racial overtones. Thistlewood fits more closely into the explanation that Bell Hooks puts forward that, "as long as the white owner 'paid' for the sexual services of his black female slave, he felt absolved of responsibility of such acts."¹⁴ The concept of paid is somewhat problematic for Thistlewood as an overseer of someone else's slaves, but, Thistlewood treated it as a commercial transaction, which follows Hooks' view of responsibility.

Women entered into sexual relationships with Thistlewood and his acquaintances on various levels, from rape to coerced casual sex, to short term relationships, to stable and even affectionate unions that offered advantage to the women involved and their children.¹⁵ There have been many misconceptions about the nature of the sexual exploitation of female slaves. Patterson claimed it was "the most disgraceful and iniquitous aspect of Jamaican slave society."¹⁶ A more balanced appraisal, however, reveals a very subtle and complex framework of sexual relations. Although exploitation did exist, many white men from all ranks formed fond and enduring relations with slave women. These prolonged unions led to a rise in status for the women involved and could, therefore, help a minority to establish themselves in the mainstream of Caribbean society by making gains such as manumission for themselves or children, and inheriting the estates of their partners.¹⁷ While only a minority of slave women could achieve this level of advantage for themselves, others could gain monetary rewards, possible reprieve from punishment or field labour, even if it was only on a temporary basis. Women would have recognised the advantages in sexual encounters with their white overlords and used their 'talents' to enhance their standard of living, even if it was only for a short time. For example, through receiving reward for sexual favours a woman could buy extra food or comforts for herself, and her family, or save it and put it towards the purchase of fowl or

¹⁴ Hooks. B Op cit p.25

¹⁵ Brerton. B "Searching for the Invisible Woman." Slavery and Abolition. 13.2. August 1992. pp.86-96 p.91

¹⁶ Patterson. O The Sociology of Slavery. London, 1967. p. 42

¹⁷ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.115

livestock which would then provide longer term benefits for the woman and her family. There is no doubt, of course, that a small minority of women may have practised a form of prostitution, and entered into unions with, and sold sexual favours to, white men for no other end than pure self interest and material gains.¹⁸

In establishing the pattern of Thistlewood's behaviour, it is possible to chart the way in which he operated, and in so doing to establish the level of advantage that was available to women. Thistlewood entered into sexual relations with slave women on three levels, casual encounters, short term infatuation, and long term partnership. Thistlewood's pattern of behaviour did not remain constant throughout his life in Jamaica, but the balance between the three modes of behaviour changed with age, location, and attachment to one particular slave.

Thistlewood did not record resistance to his own advances, and from the diary, we have no idea of the level of consent of the women involved. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that some of Thistlewood's conquests were actually raped by him. In the earlier years, particularly, Thistlewood records sexual encounters but does not appear to have given the slave women any reward for their services. It is possible, therefore, that these women were unwilling and therefore undeserving of a reward in Thistlewood's eyes. While the level of consent Thistlewood gained from slave women is hard to assess, from his reports on the activities of the white men with whom he associated it is clear that some acts were forced upon the slave women. There is little reason to believe Thistlewood was any different from his associates. However, there are some incidents throughout the diary which suggest that Thistlewood did not approve of what he perceived as rape by other white men. During his time at Egypt, one of his field slaves, Eve, was gang raped by a group of white men.

About 9AM Mr Cope and Mr John hutt come here, they and Mr Mason, mr gordon, mr Weech & mr Watt all dined here; all heartily drunk; and all except Mr Cope & gordon, hawl'd Eve,

¹⁸ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.117

Separately into the water room and were concern'd with her - Weech 2ce: first & last.¹⁹

Following this incident Eve ran away repeatedly, and although she was brought back each time, Thistlewood did not punish her. On another occasion he seems to defend the honour of his female slaves by preventing a group of drunken men from entering the women's sleeping quarters.

The Rangr's served a gallon of our rum They got drunk and attempted to break open the Negro house doors to come at the girls, I was obliged to get out of Bed. take my pistols and go to quiet them, which soon affected . . .²⁰

While the level of consent is hard to establish, from the diary, we can see that Thistlewood entered into many casual sexual relationships with slave women. This category of sexual relations contained most of the women with whom Thistlewood had sexual contact (see fig 1 & 2). In the ten year period between 1754 and 1764 Thistlewood had eighty eight partners²¹, with nearly half of whom he only had one sexual encounter in the whole period. Of the rest, thirty one had sexual relations with Thistlewood less than once a year in this period. As most of the women with whom Thistlewood had sexual relations did so on a very infrequent basis, most women had very little to gain from the experience. The two bitt payment that Thistlewood traditionally gave out was little compensation for the indignity they suffered.

Some slave women recognised that advances could be made in their position from entering into sexual relations with Thistlewood and other white men. There appear to be four women, besides Phibbah, who were able to make substantial gains from sexual contact with Thistlewood. These women seemed to have made themselves available to Thistlewood and others, on a regular basis, and accordingly, they were able to profit from these relationships. They gained advantages not only

¹⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Wednesday 12 March 1755 p.60

²⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/11 Tuesday 18 November 1760 p.207

²¹ For a list of the slave women and the frequency with which they had sexual contact with Thistlewood 1754-1764 refer to Appendix 1

FIGURE ONE

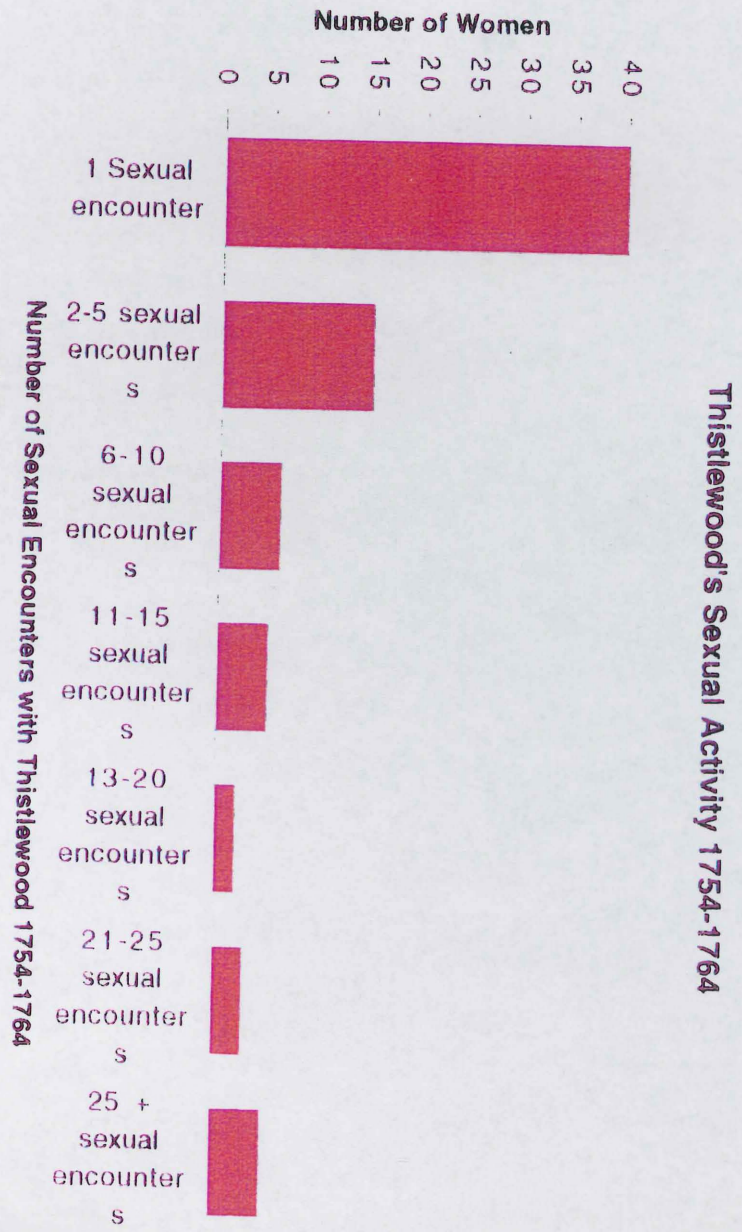
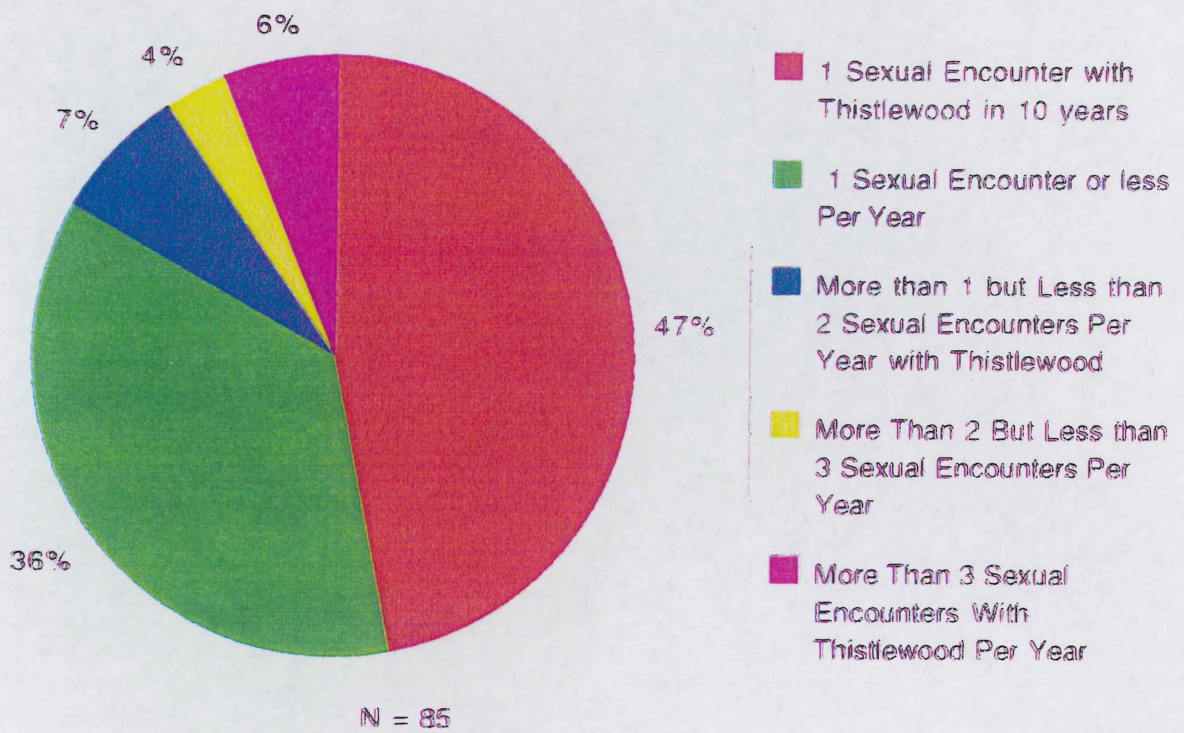


FIGURE TWO**Thistlewood's Sexual Contact 1754-1764**

as reward for the act, but also from possible favours given by Thistlewood and other white men. Women could gain further advantage by making themselves available not only to Thistlewood, but to other white men. These women were not, however, able to take full control of their sexual availability as they too could be taken without their consent and punished for refusing to comply with the white men's wishes.²² The level of financial advantage the women could obtain is hard to estimate. If you look at the amount that two of these women were able to gain in one year by this method it gives an idea of the level they could gain. In 1760 Egypt Susannah and Mazarine made seventeen and eighteen bitts respectively from sexual contact with Thistlewood alone. The buying power of this can be assessed by looking at the prices paid for produce and livestock listed in the diary. In April 1760 Thistlewood paid four bitts for a hundred plantains²³. These were part of the staple slave diet and this price would suggest that the women would have been able to buy up to four hundred plantains each. Livestock, such as pigs and goats were not far from the reach of these women either. In June 1765 Cubenna a slave sold two hogs for forty two bitts.²⁴ This would suggest that the women would have to earn only minimal amounts from their provision grounds to have enough for the purchase of a hogg. A horse, another prized possession for slaves was still slightly out of their reach, as in January 1760 Phibbah sold a filly for £4.10sh 6d²⁵, so to purchase one of these would have required saving over many years, as well as engaging in other money generating activities.

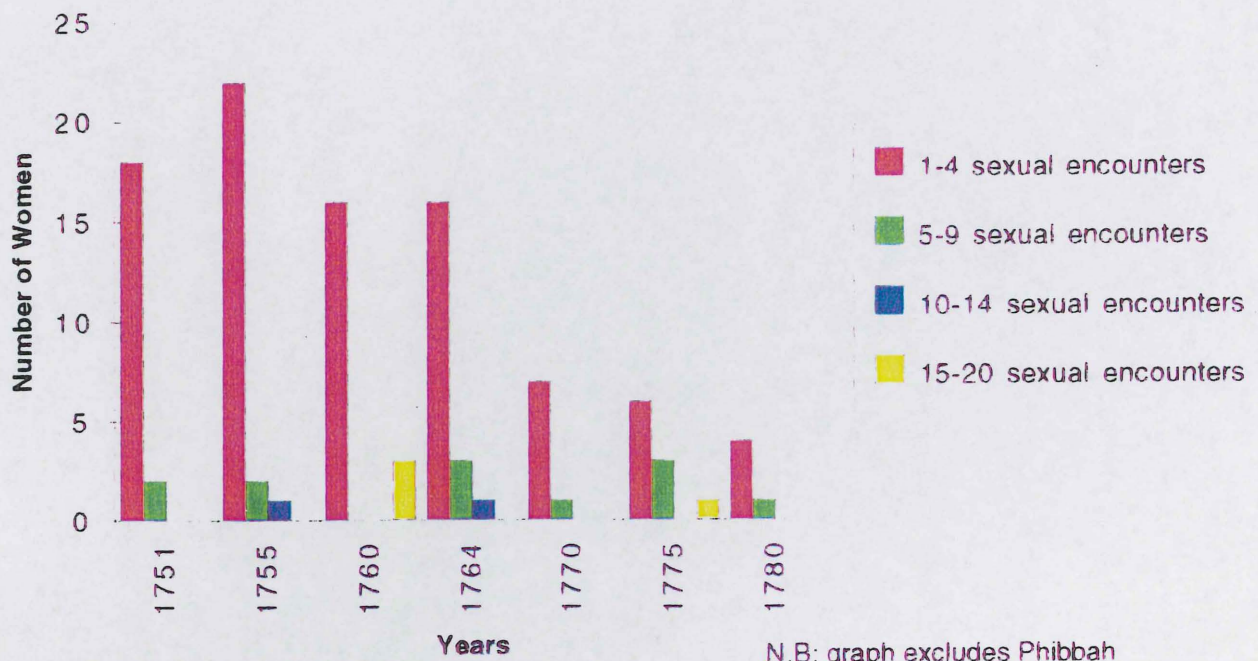
Thistlewood's sexual behaviour altered over time, and it is possible to trace this by looking at years selected from throughout his lifetime. (See Fig 3) From this graph it is

²² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/7 Wednesday 5 May 1756. p.81. The two women who were punished in this incident were two who tried to turn their exploitation to their advantage, by regularly being sexual partners to Thistlewood, and other white men.

²³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/11 Sunday 20 April 1760 p.73

²⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/16 June 1765

²⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/11 27 January 1760 p.18

FIGURE THREE**Pattern of Thistlewood's Sexual Activity Over Time**

Years	Number of Sexual Encounters with women Excluding Phibbah	Number of Sexual Encounters With Phibbah	Total Number Of Sexual Encounters With All Women
1751	37	0	37
1755	62	147	209
1760	80	44	124
1764	67	89	156
1770	24	45	77
1775	50	40	90
1780	16	50	66

possible to trace some of the trends that existed. It is obvious that throughout his life casual sexual encounters dominated Thistlewood's activities. The total number of women peaked in the mid 1750's and then steadily declined until his death. Throughout his life Thistlewood continued to have a few favourites, or sweethearts with whom he regularly received gratification. However, as time went by, there were less women fulfilling this role for Thistlewood. The dramatic drop in the number of sexual partners between 1764 and 1770 can be accounted for by the move to the Penn by Thistlewood. At the Penn there were fewer women readily accessible to him. It is also possible that by the late 1760's, as he got older, his relationship with Phibbah was secure enough that he felt less need to play the field, or that the smaller number of slaves meant it was harder to keep all his activities from her. The decline in the 1780's is likely to be due to his age and declining health, meaning he felt less inclined to seek out sexual partners.

It is hard to assess the impact that Thistlewood's sexual advances had on these women. One consequence that is documented is the prevalence of venereal disease among the slaves. It is hard to estimate the exact number of women who contracted these diseases, and from whom they contracted it, as the evidence is largely anecdotal. For example:

Clara has got the Clap, She Says ffrom London.²⁶

Thistlewood himself was frequently inflicted with bouts of venereal disease, and far from restraining him from entering sexual relations with slave women when he was infected he continued as normal, thus passing on the infection.

In the morning Cum Sabrina, Sup: Seat; In Parv: dom. a
burning seed in Coition.²⁷

Thistlewood was not considerate about Phibbah's health either and Phibbah frequently suffered from venereal disease as a direct result of Thistlewood's activities. The symptoms of the diseases were sometimes very debilitating and could keep the slaves laid up for several days.

²⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12 Thursday 15 October 1761 p.254

²⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/8 Tuesday 20 December 1757 p.196

Phibbah Complains off a Violent Pain and pricking at the bottom off her Bewlly, She has also a running which stains yellowish; Suppose it is the Fluor Ablies; or rather Suspect a Venereal Infection: gave her a mercury pill at Night.²⁸

Slave women then passed on the disease to their slave partners, and so the disease spread. From the frequency with which Thistlewood was inflicted it seems likely that large numbers of women also had the disease. The persistence of Thistlewood and others to continue to have sexual relations when they were infected meant that the diseases were passed on from person to person in an endless cycle. This cycle of venereal disease affected women's fertility and many commentators have attributed it as a factor in the low fertility and high mortality rate that existed in Jamaica.

While Thistlewood entered into casual relationships with many women, he also formed close relationships with three women. The most important relationship that Thistlewood formed was with Phibbah, and their relationship is proof that there were distinct advantages for a slave woman in becoming the steady sexual partner of a white master. Their relationship defies the belief that women had nothing to gain from a relationship with a white man except being reduced to a biological object. The real question is: was Phibbah simply playing Thistlewood for what she could get, or, were there real bonds of affection for him on her part? As we have no way of asking her, we have to look for evidence in the diary of actions that might point us one way or the other. There can be no conclusive answers, just hints as to the direction in which we should focus our thinking.

Phibbah was a shrewd woman, who recognised the benefits in forming associations with white men. There are signs of this attitude in her behaviour, prior to becoming Thistlewood's mistress. She had reached a position of importance in the house, running the Egypt cookroom, and in this position she had contact with many white men in a sexual manner. Even after she had taken up with Thistlewood, she appears to have had "an affair"

²⁸ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12 Sunday 4 January 1761 p.5

with John Cope. Phibbah may have been caught between the two because to resist Cope risked punishment, and to be with him upset and frustrated Thistlewood. Phibbah, however, would have been able to see that Cope, as her owner, had more potential for long term gain than Thistlewood, who in all probability was just passing through. As it became clear that Thistlewood was there to stay, to remain involved with Thistlewood also presented opportunities. He was a bachelor, with no legitimate descendants. Therefore, a long term liaison with him presented the opportunity for manumission, financial gain, and inheritance for any children they may have together, if not for herself. On this score Phibbah could be well pleased, because Thistlewood manumitted first their son John and then on his death Phibbah herself. John predeceased Thistlewood, so we will not know if he would have left the whole estate to him, had he outlived his father. Phibbah received not only her manumission in his will, but also enough money to buy land and to build a house.²⁹

There were also advantages for Thistlewood in having a long term relationship with Phibbah. She provided a constant source of female companionship that he appears to have craved, and at the same time provided him with the other functions of a wife without the trappings and responsibilities of an eighteenth century marriage. The disadvantage to Thistlewood was that he could not introduce Phibbah into polite society. However, the circles that Thistlewood largely moved in were male dominated and he seemed to have little time for the conventions of a genteel existence and society that a wife would have imposed upon him. At the same time, a relationship with a powerful member of the slave community gave him an ear into the slave community and Phibbah would have, through her network of friends and relatives, kept him informed of the activities of his neighbours, both black and white.

However, does the fact that Phibbah and Thistlewood could see tangible benefits from having a relationship together preclude

²⁹ Hall. D In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-1786
MacMillan Pub, London, 1989. p.313

the possibility that they felt affection towards each other? There are two answers to this question: that affection kept them together for so many years, or that an eye for opportunity by both partners kept them together. The truth probably lies somewhere in the middle. To trace their relationship together throws some light on the situation.

One of the first times that Phibbah is mentioned in the diary is not an auspicious grounding for a serious relationship. After Thistlewood is attacked by Congo Sam in 1752 he noted:

Have reason to believe yt: Many off Negroes, as Quashie, Ambo, Phibbah &c know yt: Sam had intent to murder me, when we should meet, by what I heard them speak one day in the Cook room, when I was in the back piazo reading.³⁰

Phibbah is then only mentioned in passing for the next six months until their first sexual encounter on 19 July, 1753. From here their relationship develops into one that they appear to have both been comfortable with. However, they were frequently at loggerheads until the late 1760's when they both took up residence at the penn and their relationship ran on a more or less even keel. There were two basic sources of disagreement: the philandering in which they both indulged, and Thistlewood's treatment of the slaves.

The fact that Phibbah became Thistlewood's steady sexual partner did not stop him finding other women to gratify his sexual desires. This could be viewed as normal eighteenth century behaviour: after all, white men cheated on their wives with slave women every day, and if Phibbah is to be seen as his wife she should be seen in this context. It would seem that, most of the time, Phibbah did not feel aggrieved by Thistlewood's activities. There are three explanations for Phibbah's general state of calm over Thistlewood's behaviour. The first was that to complain too loudly might jeopardise her position with Thistlewood, and she would have known there were others who would readily take her place at his side, as she had taken Jenny's. The second, was that in African culture, while

³⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/3 Wednesday 27 December 1752 p.251

long partnerships existed, monogamy was not considered necessary for a successful partnership. There were many situations when it was acceptable to take another partner. One such situation was during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Thistlewood noted this custom in his diary.

Some Negro Women want their Consumption with a Strange Man, so long as their Child Sucks, for say they for a woman not to do so in about (Mondays) because (of the) affront to Nature or said shall probably alter the Woman's milk so as to make the child sick.³¹

The third reason, was that Phibbah believed that Thistlewood's promiscuous behaviour gave her license to conduct her own extra-partnership relationships, which she seems to have done. Thistlewood suspected she entered into sexual relations with several other men, including John Cope, William Crookshanks and John Hutt.

#AM Mr John hutt Went away. Suspect Phibbah in the garden (gathering peas) with him. Quarrell'd with her.³²

It is clear from Thistlewood's reaction that he disliked Phibbah being with other men and wanted to keep Phibbah's attentions to himself. The white code of Jamaican society held that it was unhealthy for the white community if a man engaged in sexual relations with another man's mistress, as Moreton's book told the prospective resident

never strive to seduce your friend or employer's kept-mistress, for it is mean, and will injure you with bachelors in general . . .³³

Despite this rule it seems that several men wanted Phibbah's attention. This included John Cope, Thistlewood's employer. The relative positions of the two men, and the property rights that Cope could exercise over Phibbah, meant that Thistlewood felt powerless to confront or prevent Cope from entering a sexual relationship with her. This meant that, instead, he quarrelled with Phibbah over her involvement, and, showed great jealousy and frustration about their relationship

³¹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/2 Friday 10 May 1751. p.67

³² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Sunday 23 November 1755 p.246

³³ Moreton. J B West India Manners and Customs. London, 1793. p.127

At Night had great words Cum Phibbah in bed about her behaviour &c since Mr Cope came.³⁴

However, when Thistlewood felt that competition for Phibbah's attention came from someone from the same, or, inferior position to himself, Thistlewood had no hesitation in confronting the situation head on. This was the case when he tried to prevent William Crookshanks from associating with Phibbah in 1754 and 1755.

In the Evening had words with William. About so Much in the Cookroom with Phibbah, and being so familiar with her.³⁵

In contrast, to Thistlewood who was regularly jealous and suspicious of Phibbah, there were few occasions that Phibbah lashed out at Thistlewood for his infidelities. The one occasion that she did get upset with his behaviour was in 1755 when she was lying in after giving birth. Phibbah had provided Thistlewood with a sweetheart, as was the West African custom, for her period of abstinence. However, instead of using her services Thistlewood went elsewhere for gratification. Phibbah was very annoyed by his behaviour.

at Night Went to see Phibbah, she is much out of humour about eve yesterday morn'g: don't know who can have told her.³⁶

Phibbah's rage with Thistlewood lasted a week, in which time she moved out of his house and argued frequently with him. Phibbah's anger seemed to be, not so much that Thistlewood had another sexual partner, but that he deliberately ignored her wishes, by refusing the sweetheart she provided and finding someone else. In other words her anger was not so much to do with sex but was more to do with power issues.

Despite some tension over sexual partners, Phibbah and Thistlewood grew closer together. On many occasions Phibbah tried to use her position of influence with Thistlewood to intervene on behalf of the other slaves. This often led to tension

³⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/5 Thursday 3 October 1754 Ref 312

³⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Sunday 26 October 1755 p.232

³⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Friday 22 August 1755 p.193

between Thistlewood and Phibbah, as Thistlewood felt that she had overstepped the bounds of her authority. For example in 1760 he wrote

PM Reprimanded Phibbah for Intermeddling with the field negroes Business with me.³⁷

If Phibbah felt strongly enough that Thistlewood had committed an injustice she would make her feelings known more strongly than arguing with him and left his house and move back to the cook room or the slave quarters. One such incident occurred in 1755 when London had runaway and wished to return to Egypt without punishment, and Phibbah supported his position.

Last night had some Words with Phibbah anmd (She was very saucy) abt: Shewing me London Who Wanted to Come home.

To day Noon I also had some discourse with Mrs Cope about him - Phibbah has took her things out off my house While I was away in the Morning, and has not Come in it since.³⁸

Phibbah stayed away for three days and only returned when London was in the hothouse, seemingly unpunished for running away.³⁹ On this occassion Phibbah seems to be have been successful in her protest, but over the period that Thistlewood and Phibbah were together there were few such clear cut examples of Phibbah's actions having a positive affect on Thistlewood's behaviour. The greatest effect that her actions had may have been that it forced Thistlewood to rethink his position. The protest may not have changed a decision already made, as that would have meant a loss of face in front of the slaves. However, it may have influenced future behaviour.

The greatest test to Thistlewood and Phibbah's relationship occurred in 1757 when Thistlewood temporarily left Egypt to take up a position at Kendall Estate. Their relationship continued throughout his time there. This could be interpreted as a sign of affection, or, simply as a way that both Thistlewood and Phibbah could attempt to manipulate the situation to their own advantage. It should probably be seen as a combination of

³⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/11 Friday 17 January 1760 p.8

³⁸ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Sunday 6 July 1755 p.147

³⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Thursday 10 July 1755 p.151

both. A few days before Thistlewood was due to leave Egypt he records

Phibbah grieves very much, and last night I could not sleep but was vastly uneasy.⁴⁰

This suggests there was affection between them and that parting would be a traumatic experience that they were both dreading. There is further evidence of Thistlewood's feelings when he notes on the day of departure

Begged hard off mr Cope to sell or hire me Phibbah to me, but she would not; he was willing.⁴¹

There is a certain ambiguity in the word she in this entry, it could refer to Mrs Cope or Phibbah. It was likely to be Phibbah, as she had earlier refused to go with Thistlewood if he moved away from Egypt. I believe that Phibbah would have had good reason for refusing to go with Thistlewood to Kendall. To leave Egypt would have meant not only leaving family and friends, but also a position of importance and power that she had created in her own right. Moving to Kendall would not only mean risking a reduction in status, but also would make her dependent on Thistlewood for position and identity. Thistlewood's feelings seem to suggest that he did not want to leave Phibbah, but he probably assumed that once he left he would find someone new to fill her place at his side as he had done when he left Marina and Vineyard previously.

John Cope, eager to have Thistlewood back at Egypt, used Phibbah as a draw card to get Thistlewood to come back to Phibbah, and allowed her to visit him regularly with requests to return.

*In the Evening Sam:l Matthews come . . . and Phibbah with him . . . Come vastly unexpected was sent to persuade me back to Egypt.⁴²

Phibbah may have wanted Thistlewood to return not only for herself, but for the sake of the other slaves who, having survived the excesses of the settling in period, did not wish to go through the 'breaking in' of another overseer. There was no disadvantage for Phibbah in continuing to see Thistlewood. It meant that she

⁴⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/8 Saturday 19 June 1757 p.93

⁴¹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/8 Wednesday 22 June 1757 p.94

⁴² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/8 Saturday 2 July 1757 p.101

was able to travel off the plantation regularly, primarily to see him, but at the same time could make contact with other slave communities. She could gain favour with John Cope by appearing to help his scheme to get Thistlewood back to Egypt, and if it paid off and Thistlewood did return she would have solidified her position with him by appearing loyal to him in his absence. At the same time Phibbah perhaps received no better offers for her time or devotion, so Thistlewood could still fulfil some of her needs in that regard.

The visits that Phibbah made to Thistlewood paid off. He began to miss her and wanted to return to Egypt

To night very lonely and melancholy, no person sleep in y^r: house but my self and Phibbah being gone this morning still fresh in my mind.⁴³

It could be that Thistlewood missed the company of a woman as much as he missed Phibbah herself, as during his time at Kendall he failed to create a steady relationship with any of the slave women. This could have been partly due to Phibbah's continuing presence in his life which made it hard for Thistlewood to sever his ties with her. This, combined with Cope eventually offering Thistlewood what he wanted, persuaded him to return to Egypt. The result of this interlude for Phibbah was that she managed to keep, and maybe even strengthen, her relationship with Thistlewood, without having to compromise her own position in the Egypt community. Therefore, through careful planning and manipulation she had gained the result she desired without having to relinquish anything in return.

When it came to moving to the Penn with Thistlewood in 1767 there was less conflict of interest for Phibbah. Thistlewood would be the owner and not merely a servant himself. Moreover the other slaves working at the Penn already knew and respected Phibbah, so she did not have to start again to carve a niche for herself, and she was still close to her family and friends whom she visited regularly. By 1767, after fourteen years together, Phibbah and Thistlewood's relationship probably contained a

⁴³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/8 Monday 4 July 1757 p.103

greater level of affection in it than it had done ten years previously when Thistlewood was at Kendall. This meant there would have been heartbreak to have separated at this stage of their relationship.

Thistlewood and Phibbah's relationship was based on a mixture of opportunity and affection with the balance changing slightly throughout their partnership. Whatever the nature of their relationship Phibbah did have some power over Thistlewood. By the late 1750's, when Phibbah was more firmly established as mistress, the excesses of work and punishments of the previous years were gone. This appears to have been partly due to Phibbah's influence, and that of her close friends with whom Thistlewood also associated. The timing of their relationship should not, however, be underestimated. By the mid to late 1750's one would assume that Thistlewood had been at Egypt long enough to assert his authority to a greater degree than he had previously been able to. Phibbah's presence in Thistlewood's house may have been enough to gain the respect of the slaves, as by becoming his partner she was effectively endorsing him as a permanent and responsible force.

By attaching herself firmly to Thistlewood, Phibbah ran the risk of alienating herself from the slave community. The high level of contact she had with white people could have made the slaves suspicious of her, and instead of including her within their midst think of her as a spy or ally to the white community. This did not appear to happen. While it is hard to know for sure, it seems that despite her association with the white community she remained a respected and admired participant in the slave community for whom she often intervened. She kept in contact with slaves from around the district through gifts and visits. She also participated in the activities and ceremonies of the slave community. For example, she attended plays and funerals of many slaves and went to help care for the sick and wounded

Little Nancy /paradise coobah's/ took with a vomitting last night Phib staid in yl: cookroom to assist catalina with her all night.⁴⁴

The affection and respect with which the slave community held Phibbah can be assessed by the fact that when she was sick, many slaves came to visits her, concerned for her well being. In 1775, Phibbah suffered a particularly bad illness, and she seemed close to death.

at 1PM Wrote to mrs cope, by Jimmy, ffor Jenny young⁴⁵ .
Who came directly, & Staid All night, . . . In the Evening Mr Limeburner rode over & staid a While, & many off Egypt Negroes as Quasheba, L:Mimber, Sibbe, Julina, L:Nelly, &c &c Come to see Phibbah⁴⁶

These women were not all domestic slaves, but were field slaves. This suggests that Phibbah had association with, and respect from slaves from all areas of production.

The overall result of the liaison for Phibbah was great gains and personal advantage. This occurred because she was able to create a limited position for herself within white society, without compromising her position within the slave community. By doing this she was able to use her position to influence and mediate between the two communities.

The relationship that Thistlewood and Phibbah had was not unusual, except prehaps in length. It was common practice, especially among men of the middle class, to keep a slave woman rather than marry a European wife. In Thistlewood's diary he commented on a number of his associates that also kept slave mistresses. One such couple was William Crookshanks and Myrtilla, a field slave owned by Mr and Mrs Mould. Their relationship was stormy and they often fought in public. In doing this Crookshanks was breaking one of the unwritten codes of white society. The code ensured that it was unacceptable to let any slave, including a mistress, gain the upper hand in negotiations between white and black. Thistlewood was

⁴⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/21 Friday 29 June 1770 p.103

⁴⁵ Jenny Young is Phibbah's daughter Coobah who changed her name in 1771 when she was christened.

⁴⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/26 Thursday 1 June 1775. p.105

particularly horrified by Crookshanks' behaviour when the Moulds took her away from Egypt and back to their estate.

At night William Crookshanks abused Mr & Mrs Mould in an extraordinary manner in y^l: Savanna, at their own house, afterwards Cry'd, went down on his knees & begged their pardon etc Myrtilla the cause.⁴⁷

The relationship between this couple raises the issue that while mistresses were an accepted part of Jamaican society, there were rules to be followed and to break them could mean ostracism by one or both communities. Therefore, both partners had to tread a delicate balance between success and failure, wide acceptance and non acceptance.

The connection between white men and slave women was often cemented by the birth of a mulatto child. This was the case for both Thistlewood and Phibbah and Crookshanks and Myrtilla. While both these children were accepted by their father, it was not the case for all children. This was especially true of children who were the product of a casual sexual encounter. Regardless of whether the child's paternity was accepted or not, mulatto children were living proof of the sexual connection between white men and slave women.

Childbirth and motherhood were burdensome tasks for women trapped by slavery, as they were given few concessions by their masters to enjoy this area of their life. However, women learned that they could use pregnancy and childbirth to their advantage, and gain time away from the field, and reprieve from punishment, if they manipulated their master in the right way. As seen in Chapter three, women were released from the field nearing the time around the birth of their children, and if a woman had close contact with Thistlewood it could lead to greater time away from the field. In research into the Kollock plantations in Georgia, John Campbell concluded that extra concessions could also be gained if women were able to recognise their condition at an early stage, and, for this reason women in their second and subsequent pregnancies gained more

⁴⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/7 Thursday 24 February 1756 p.31

time off than women having their first baby.⁴⁸ It is hard to assess whether this was also true of the women under Thistlewood's control. It would seem likely, as the ability to persuade Thistlewood they were near their time seemed an important element in leaving work.

Another way that women could turn their reproductive potential to their advantage was through phantom pregnancies or gynaecological complaints.⁴⁹ In this way women were often able to escape working in the field as the level of obstetrics and gynaecological knowledge was so poor in the eighteenth century that masters were reliant on the women to recognise these conditions.

Women were also able to use their pregnancy as a way of escaping punishment. This was not universal, and there were examples throughout the West Indies of pregnant women being brutally punished. Thistlewood, it would seem, was reluctant to whip a pregnant woman, especially if she was close to delivery as this incident in 1778 shows.

Mr Ballintine rode over & made a complaint off Fanny, Sukey & Bess beating Egypt Flora (Quasheba's daughter) at Savanna la Mar yesterday. Flogged Sukey & Bess, but Fanny's belly's too big at present, tho she was chief in the fray.⁵⁰

While slave women's reproductive function gave women some opportunity to escape from work and punishment, it largely led to a cycle of pregnancy, miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant deaths which few women managed to avoid. In Kenneth Kiple's study of the Caribbean slave he concluded that fertility levels, per se, were not low among Caribbean slave women, but that infant mortality was high. He estimated that forty percent of all

⁴⁸ Campbell. J "Work, Pregnancy, and Infant Mortality Among Southern Slaves." Journal of Interdisciplinary History. XIV: 4 (Spring 1984). pp.793-812. pp801-802

⁴⁹ Fox-Genovese. E "Strategies and Forms of Resistance: Focus on Slave Women in the United States." In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean and Afro American History. G. Okihiro (ed). University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1986. p.157

⁵⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/29 Monday 23 February 1778

infants died⁵¹ and that the number of stillbirths and miscarriages was high among slave women.⁵² The cycle that women were trapped in took its toll on the health and welfare of women.

Thistlewood appears to have been ambivalent towards the reproductive function of his slaves. He did not appear to actively encourage childbirth, but at the same time did not discourage it. He made some provision for time off work surrounding the birth of a child and presented gifts to the mother of extra provisions following the birth.

Last night Basheba was brought to bed off a Girl. Gave her some Flower, Rum & Sugar.⁵³

The fertility rates among female slaves under Thistlewood's care were low. This is consistent with the findings from other studies of fertility among slaves in Jamaica. The low fertility of female slaves in the West Indies has been the topic for much historical debate. The debate has centred on the relative importance of the physiological factors, prolonged lactation, poor health⁵⁴ and lack of a stable partner.⁵⁵ The relative importance of these factors varies from commentary to commentary.

Historians have identified two physiological functions that may have affected women's ability to have children. The first is that for African born women the shock and physical trauma of transportation was so great that they became sterile⁵⁶ It is hard to assess this statement in terms of the women in the diary, as it does not cover the full life span of the slave women themselves. There is also a problem of accurate data as there

⁵¹ Kiple. K The Caribbean Slave: A Biological History. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984. p.117

⁵² Kiple. K The Caribbean Slave p.115

⁵³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/3 Tuesday 17 February 1752 p.72

⁵⁴ Reddock. R "Women and the Slave plantation Economy in the Caribbean." Retrieving Women's History: Changing Perspectives of Women in Politic and Society. Kleinberg. J (ed). Berg/UNESCO, Oxford, 1979. pp.105-133 pp.110-112

⁵⁵ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.129

⁵⁶ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.130

was probable under-reporting by Thistlewood of both miscarriage and stillbirth which make it impossible to draw an accurate picture of the women's true fertility. The second is linked to the poor diet, overwork, and the incidence of venereal disease, and suggests that these factors combined to produce late menarche and early menopause, therefore shortening the potential child bearing years. These events are also hard to establish from the diary. For some women it is possible to trace their child bearing span, from the date of their first to last pregnancy, but this does not necessarily coincide with the menarche and menopause.

Prolonged lactation had a contraceptive effect on women. Breastfeeding initially acted as a contraceptive, albeit an unreliable one. Also the African taboo on sexual relations during this time, created an even more effective contraceptive. There is evidence that slave women adopted this custom. When Phibbah was pregnant in 1755 records

Phibbah brought me Mountain Lucy to keep as a Sweetheart the time she lies in. I said nothing to her.⁵⁷

This suggests that Phibbah was providing Thistlewood with an approved alternative to service his needs during the time of taboo. It is hard to establish, from the diary, how long his slaves lactated. Prolonged lactation may help to explain the differences in fertility between North America and the West Indies. There were two reasons West Indian slave women were more likely to lactate longer than those in North America. The first was that the poor diet created a need to breastfeed to a later age to give their children a chance of surviving past the first year.⁵⁸ The second was the predominance of Africans, which led to a greater retention of African cultural practices in the West Indies. This meant that women were more likely to adhere to the practise of long lactation period that existed in Africa. These two areas were closely related and the presence

⁵⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Monday 28 July 1755 p.166

⁵⁸ Klein and Engerman "Fertility Differentials Between Slaves in the United States and the British West Indies: A note on Lactation Practices and their Possible Implications." William and Mary Quarterly. XXV (1978) pp.357-374. p.370-372

of one reflected the need for the other. Lactation practices explain the differences in spacing of children more than the actual low fertility rates. In North America the average gap between children was 2.9 years compared to 3-4 years in the West Indies.⁵⁹

The general state of women's health also contributed to their fertility. It is more likely, however, that factors such as overwork, malnutrition and disease contributed more to infant mortality and miscarriages, than fertility per se.⁶⁰ Slave women suffered dangerous pregnancies because of both the conditions in which they lived, and also the lack of knowledge about, or, proper conditions for child birth. Women of both races suffered from misconceptions about their sexuality and child bearing ability. For example, Edward Long states of slaves

Their women are delivered with little or no labour; they have therefore no more occasion for midwives, than the female oran-outang, or any other wild animal. A woman brings forth her child in quarter of an hour, goes the same day to the sea, and washes herself. Some have even been known to bring forth twins without a shriek, or a scream; and it is seldom they are confined above two, or, at most, three days.⁶¹

While Thistlewood does not seem to have ascribed to such a philosophy, it would be fair to say that eighteenth century notions of childbirth and the reproductive function of women were underdeveloped and, as a result, the treatment of women of all races was not conducive to healthy and successful pregnancies and births. These same set of circumstances meant that white women also suffered in pregnancy and the white infant mortality rate was also high.

Miscarriage and infant mortality rates were high among the slaves under Thistlewood's care, and it would seem that this, rather than low fertility, had the most impact on slave numbers. To assess the number of miscarriages amongst women we can

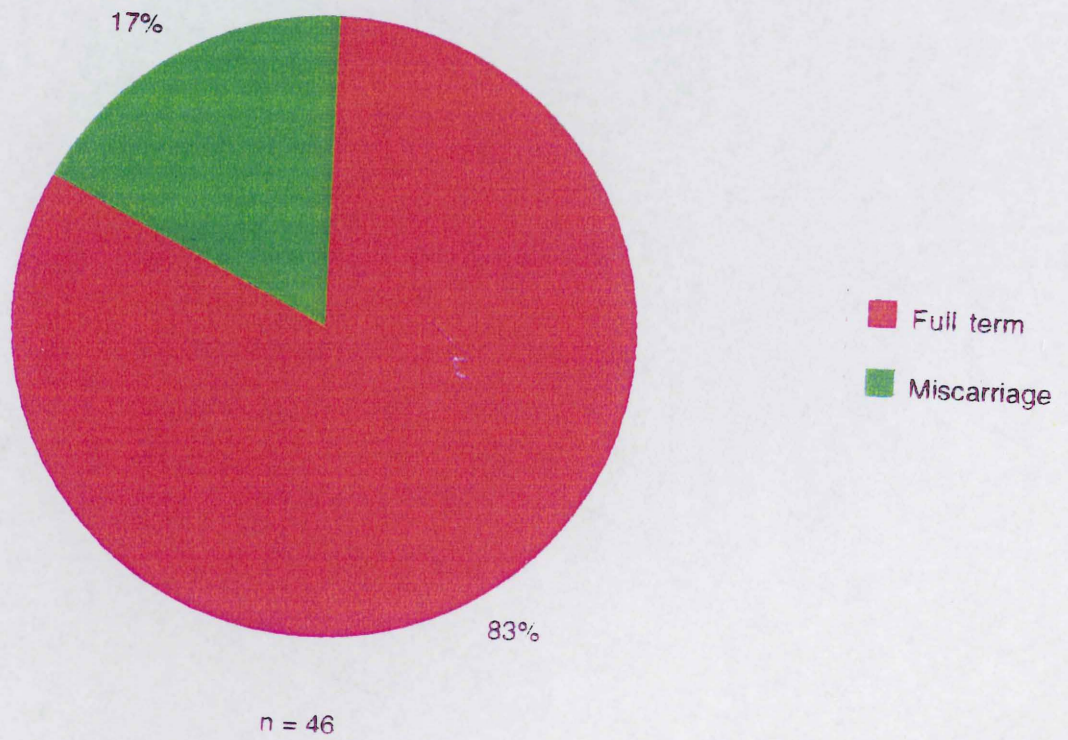
⁵⁹ Klein and Engerman "Fertility Differentials Between Slaves in the United States and the British West Indies." p.368

⁶⁰ Hooks. B Ain't I A Woman p.41

⁶¹ Long. E Hlstory of Jamaica. London. 1776. vol2 p.380

FIGURE FOUR

Pregnancy Rate 1750-1760



compare the number of full term and terminated pregnancies. (see fig 4) Figure four shows there were significant losses to the potential population through terminated pregnancies among Thistlewood's slave women between 1750 and 1760. The loss to the potential population is even greater if you look at the infant death rate, or deaths within the first six months of life. (See fig 5 & 6) Bush estimated that a quarter of all slave infants died within fourteen days of birth, and that the first nine days were the most vulnerable.⁶² Figure five shows that between 1750 and 1760 nearly half of all babies did not live to see the first six months, and that seventy six percent of these did not live to see the first fourteen days (see fig 6). This would suggest that a much higher figure than a quarter of the slave infants under Thistlewood's care died in the first fourteen days. However, the figures reflect Bush's view that most babies died within the first nine days (see fig 6) as seventy percent of the babies who died within the first six months did so within nine days.

The lack of complete information in plantation records makes it hard to gain a comparative figure, and assess how typical Thistlewood's figures are. In Dunn's study of Mesopotamia he stated that where records were complete, it appeared that about half of all pregnancies ended in miscarriage, still birth, or infant death within a few days.⁶³ This figure would seem to approximate the figures we are able to glean from the diary. By contrast, the letters of Simon Taylor from the Golden Grove Plantation in Jamaica between 1765 and 1810 suggest that prior to the 1790's the infant mortality rate was as high as eighty percent.⁶⁴ This would suggest that both the slaves under Thistlewood's care and the slaves at Mesopotamia had a relatively low infant mortality rate.

⁶² Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.143

⁶³ Dunn. RS "Sugar Production and Slave Women in Jamaica." Cultivation and Culture: Labour and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas. I Berlin & PD Morgan (ed). Univerlsity Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1993. pp.49-72. pp.65-66

⁶⁴ Wood. B & Clayton T "Slave Birth, Death and Disease on Golden Grove Estate, Jamaica 1765-1810." Slavery and Abolition. 6 1985. pp.99-121. p.113

FIGURE FIVE

Infant Mortality 1750-1760

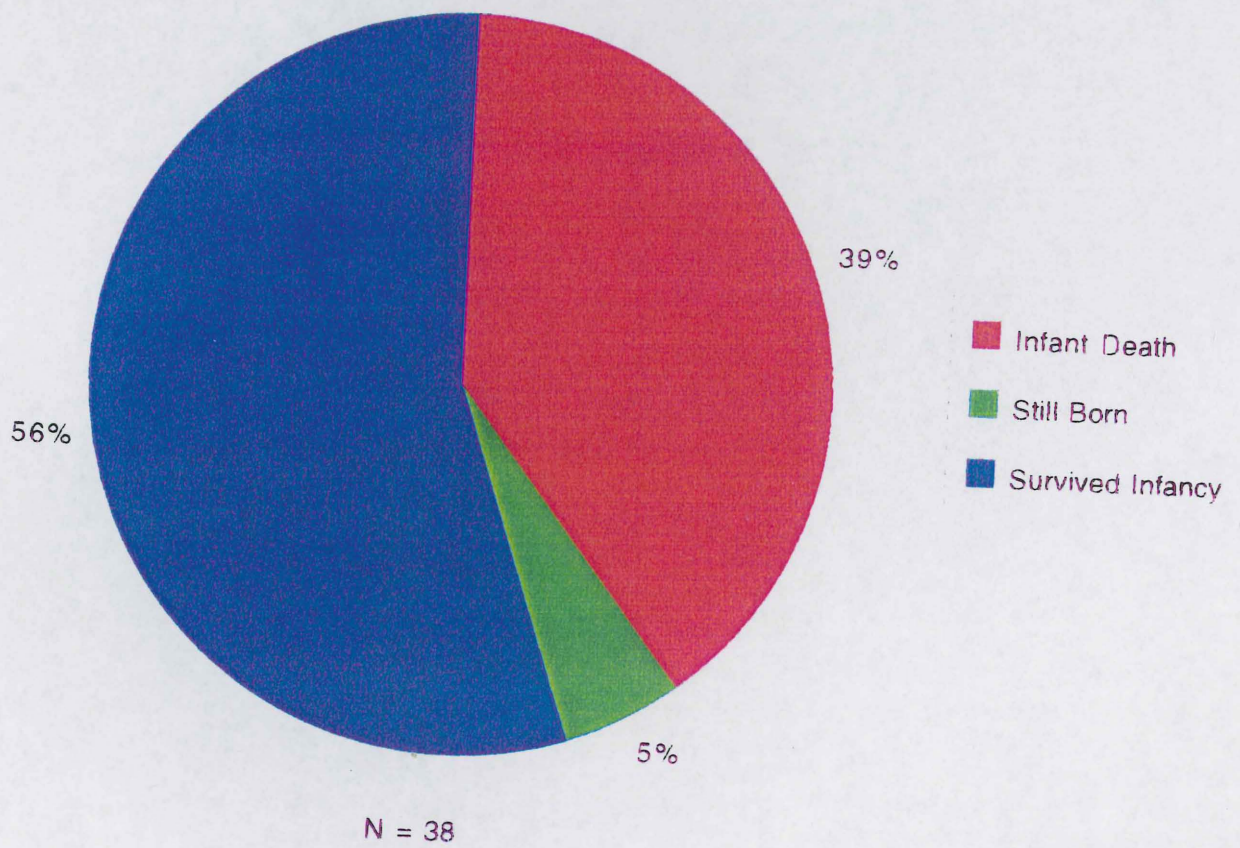
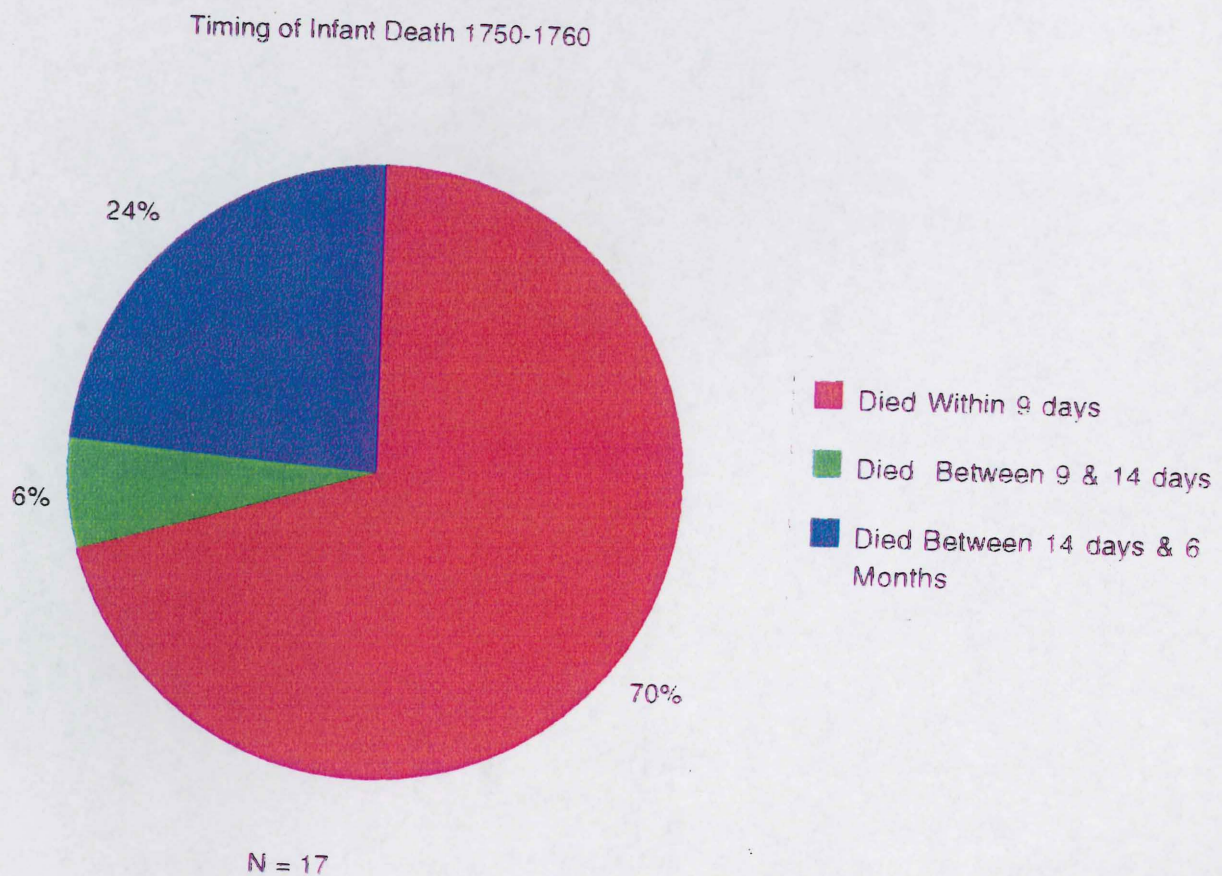


FIGURE SIX

Contemporary sources list the causes as peripneumonic fevers caused by damp air or tetanus nascentium or jawfall and lock jaw.⁶⁵ This appears to be supported by the account that Thistlewood gives of the infant deaths. To understand why the rate was so high many contemporaries, including Thistlewood blamed the slave midwives

In the morning Sarah's child died. Old daphne not good for much⁶⁶

Accounts by other planters and slave doctors agreed 'bad' treatment of the umbilicus ovas was the primary cause of disease. The conditions for tetanus certainly existed in the slave village as the huts were in close quarters with the livestock pens, but, if tetanus from these circumstances was the cause of high infant mortality it should have affected the whole population. The figures across the age spectrum, however, are low compared to death from yaws or dysentery. Another reason to question the living conditions as seriously affecting the health of the baby, was that there should also be a high incidence among mothers, but this again appears to be untrue.⁶⁷

The symbolic nature of the first eight or nine days of a baby's life in African, and therefore Afro-Caribbean folklore, has been suggested by some historians as the reason for high infant mortality. This folklore states that for the first eight or nine days a new born baby is not considered part of this world. This means that, until this period is over the baby may be ritually neglected as it was considered no more than a wandering spirit, or a visitor from the underworld.⁶⁸ If a baby dies during this time it was considered not to have existed. It is not clear whether the slaves under Thistlewood's care subscribed to this practice or not. Thistlewood does not mention any misgivings about the women's ability to mother their children. However, non reporting by Thistlewood is not any evidence in itself for its non existence. Another way to try to gauge may be the recorded emotions that the slave women show following an infant's death.

⁶⁵ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.143

⁶⁶ Thistlewood. T Monsoon 31/10 Tuesday 20 November 1759 p.217

⁶⁷ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.144-145

⁶⁸ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.146

Here again Thistlewood is a scant recorder, so it is hard to adjudge. However, given the apparent respect that the slave women surrounding Thistlewood had for other African traditions, it is likely that they also followed this practice.

The effect that this type of reproductive pattern had on a particular woman can be seen if we draw a reproductive time line for one of Thistlewood's slave women. Abba was the most prolific child bearer that Thistlewood owned, therefore clearly a fertile woman. However her time line clearly shows the effect that miscarriage, infant and child death had on her family size.

30 Dec 1761 - Mary born
 7 Oct 1763 - Johnnie Born (Died 1771)
 18 Nov 1766 - Neptune born (Died 1773)
 17 Oct 1771 - Girl born - Died one week later
 25 Aug 1772 - Jenny born
 4 May 1774 - Miscarried
 9 June 1775 - Boy born - Died one week later
 21 Apr 1776 - Phibbah born
 2 Mar 1780 - Boy born - Died next day
 18 Dec 1780 - Miscarried
 21 Sep 1781 - Miscarried
 27 Oct 1782 - Ben born

The timeline shows that Abba underwent 12 pregnancies in 21 years, bore nine children to full term, three of whom died in the first week, and two of whom died before their tenth birthday. When Thistlewood died, Abba had four living children, Mary, Jenny, Phibbah and Ben, and one grand-daughter, the daughter of Mary the eldest, who had also suffered a miscarriage before she carried to full term.

Some historians have suggested that a lack of stable partnerships among slaves led to lower fertility. While it is hard to determine the level of relationships between slaves it seems that many of the adult slaves, in Thistlewood's diary, lived in serial monogamy and few were without a partner for

long. For example, Phoebe was matched in 1767 to Egypt Neptune at the age of only fourteen. She appears to have remained with him until the late 1770's when she was matched with Jimmy. This would suggest that this explanation has little weight in this case study. Nevertheless looking at individual cases it would follow that those who formed lasting relationships were more likely to have more children than those who do not appear to.

The attitude of Thistlewood and other masters to their slaves' fertility affected the reproductive levels among their slaves. This was because women may have been persuaded to become pregnant if masters provided incentives and time off surrounding the birth. Conversely, if the master was negative towards slave reproduction and actively discouraged it through no concessions for pregnant or post natal women this may have hampered women's desire to be pregnant. In general, masters did not think of their new possessions as couples who would raise children. Instead most made a rational decision to buy instead of breed. By this method masters before the 1780's were able to sustain their slave numbers without having to encourage the raising of children who would have had unproductive years.⁶⁹ In many ways Thistlewood reflects this attitude. He rarely mentions expectant mothers or a slave child by name, let alone refer to children in general. He seems to have regarded expectant or nursing mothers as a nuisance rather than a blessing. Many commentators, both contemporary and current, have placed indirect and direct responsibility for low fertility on masters. They see masters preferring male slaves to female slaves, and not offering suitable care during pregnancy and for new born infants.⁷⁰ This explanation, however suggests that women were persuaded by the attitudes of their masters rather than making their own decisions about fertility.

⁶⁹ Mullin. M Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean 1736-1831. University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1992. p.20

⁷⁰ Engerman. S "Some Economic and Demographic Comparisons of Slavery in the United States and the British West Indies." Economic History Review. 2nd Ser XXIX. 1975 pp.258-275 p.269-270

Women had strong motivations to limit the number of children they had. The burden of children under the conditions of slavery was great, as there was little time to care for a child. In addition, women may have felt they were bringing children into a life of bondage a punishment they felt no human deserved.⁷¹ Thus, women, in controlling their fertility were creating an effective means of resistance against which planters were almost powerless.⁷² There were three forms of action that women could take to resist their master in this way. The first was to practice abstinence. Clark Hine and Wittenstein have suggested that by refusing, or, attempting to avoid to have sex with their white master, and putting off marriage to a fellow slave, women could effectively reduce the possibility of conception.⁷³ If a woman did fall pregnant she had two avenues open to her. The second way to gain control over their reproductive capacity, therefore, was abortion. However there is evidence that this was practised less often than abstinence.⁷⁴ In many cases, it is also hard to determine whether termination of pregnancy was deliberately induced by abortion or a naturally created miscarriage. There is evidence in the diary that slaves practised abortion and knew of herbs and practises that induced termination. For example, in 1767, Thistlewood records
 PM Mountain Lucy miscarried, having I am told drank
 contrayerva lately every day on purpose.⁷⁵

The third way a woman had to gain control over her reproduction, was infanticide, which along with suicide may be seen as the ultimate statement of resistance. This was not necessarily a sign of neglect but that mothers loved their children too much to see them grow up in bondage, or the baby

⁷¹ Bush. B "The Family Tree is Not Cut: Women and Cultural Resistance in Slave Family Life." In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean and Afro American History. G. Okihiro (ed). University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1986. p.126

⁷² Bush. B "The Family Tree is Not Cut." p.128

⁷³ Clark Hine. D & Wittenstein. K "Female Resistance: The Economics of Sex." Black Women Crossculturally. F. Steady (ed) Schenkman Bookd Inc, Rochester, 1981. pp.289-300 p.291

⁷⁴ Clark Hine. D & Wittenstein. K "Female Resistance" p.292

⁷⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/8 Friday 17 July 1767 p.174

may have been created out of rape and therefore not wanted.⁷⁶ The practise of infanticide, like abortion, is hard to conclusively prove, as a high infant mortality rate from natural causes could mean that it would have been easy for women to perform infanticide relatively undetected. The African belief that babies were not part of this world for the first nine days also contributed to white thinking that mothers killed their baby through neglect. It also meant that masters looking for explanations for infant mortality could blame the mothers for infant death instead of looking for environmental and other causes which might implicate themselves as negligent in looking after their property.

While reproductive related resistance seems on the surface to be an act of individual resistance, it was in fact a communal resistance. First, in order for women to practise abstinence they must have had a degree of co-operation from the slave men with whom they associated⁷⁷. Second, to practise abortion and infanticide the women would need to rely largely on each other both for secrecy and assistance⁷⁸. In both cases, there would have been more than the individual taking action. It is possible therefore that as slave women kept, to a large degree, control over their reproductive potential, they may also have determined the fate of their own children in accordance with traditional values and beliefs brought with them from Africa.⁷⁹

Slave women who came into contact with Thistlewood risked sexual exploitation from him and other white men. While the level of consent is hard to establish, Thistlewood had casual sexual encounters with many slave women. While most of these encounters provided little recompense for the women, some were able to benefit materially in some way by regularly making themselves available for sexual activity. This allowed them to create a better existence for themselves and their family. The

⁷⁶ Clark Hine. D & Wittenstein. K "Female Resistance" p.294-295

⁷⁷ Clark Hine.D & Wittenstein. K "Female Resistance" p.298

⁷⁸ Clark Hine. D & Wittenstein. K "Female Resistance" p.293

⁷⁹ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. p.147

small group of slave women who benefited most were those with whom the white men formed lasting relationships that were based on a mixture of opportunity and affection. Thistlewood was not as involved in the reproductive life of his slaves as were his nineteenth century counterparts, as the eighteenth century slave trade provided an adequate source of new recruits. The women under Thistlewood's care, while not producing a large number of future workers, suffered many miscarriages and infant deaths suggesting this rather than fertility per se was the main cause of a declining population. Women could use their fertility in a positive way by using it as a way of resisting the master through prevention, termination and death.

CHAPTER FIVE
SLAVE WOMEN AND THE SLAVE COMMUNITY

Slave women were involved both in the creation and execution of the culture which existed within the slave community. The time which slaves gave over to these cultural activities allowed them a freedom of expression which their daily drudgery precluded. The relationships that slaves formed between themselves and the familial links that spread throughout the slave community provided slaves with support networks, and a group of people on whom they felt they could rely in times of trouble. Women were integral members of the slave community, not only as an important members of slave families, but as the bearers of tradition within the slave community.¹ Thus they were able to promote a separate identity. Tradition in turn became an important weapon against total domination by the white community and culture. In this chapter, therefore, I aim to explain Thistlewood's knowledge of, and attitude towards, the slave community and culture, and how this may have been influenced by the slave women with whom he came into contact. It also seeks to establish the nature of the slave community and identify women's position within it and, to understand the cultural values and practices that Thistlewood's slaves indulged in, and recognise the role women played within that culture.

To study the workings of the slave community and culture using Thistlewood's diary does pose certain problems. As in other accounts by European observers, the information is mediated through Thistlewood's own European beliefs and values. This leaves the relative significance of events and structures open to misinterpretation. The slave participants of this community and culture are silent, and so there are gaps in our understanding.

¹ See Terborg-Penn. R "Black Women in Resistance: A Cross Cultural Perspective." In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro American History. G. Okihiro (ed) University of Massachussetts Press Amherst, 1986. pp.188-210 p.189.
and Davies. A "Reflections on the Black Women's Role in the Community of Slaves." Massachussetts Review. 13 Winter 1972. pp.81-103. p.84
and Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838. Heineman Publishers and Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1990. p.153

This is especially true in the level of importance that the slaves attached to their community and culture. These problems are common in most source available for eighteenth century slavery. This has led to some conflicting evidence being presented, especially in regard to the nature of the family and marriage. Beckles believes that the conflict in opinion among contemporary sources arises from the level of contact the writer had with the slave community. A casual observer did not recognise the nature of slave relations, whereas someone with a more intimate level of contact would have a greater knowledge.² Experienced observers, however, often made little comment on matters that newcomers or travellers felt were unusual, as custom and cultural practices were so familiar to them that they felt little need to comment. This assumption would lead us to conclude that Thistlewood would have a reasonably developed knowledge of the relationships between slaves, as he had a high level of contact with them, but that he may not record as much information as time goes by as slave culture and its practices became commonplace to him.

The diary allows us both to establish some of the structures and roles within the slave community, and develop a knowledge of the cultural practices and beliefs in which the slaves that Thistlewood had contact with were engaged. Thistlewood's knowledge of both these aspects of the slaves lives becomes more finely tuned during his time in Jamaica. The way in which Thistlewood accumulates knowledge is never explicitly stated. We can assume it was through a combination of observation and information from the slaves. This information would have been accumulated by him both directly in conversation, and indirectly through overheard conversations and messages. Thistlewood relates, for example. how a white worker at Egypt received his knowledge from the slave woman with whom he was involved.

John groves continues in his house, Ansau is ffrequently with him, and tells him all the News She can.³

² Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados. New Brunswick, NJ, 1989. p.116

³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/11 Wednesday 10 September 1760 p.159

There is no reason to believe Thistlewood was any different. It is hard to assess whether Thistlewood would have received more information about the slave community from men or women. However, it is more likely to have been women as most of his close contacts within the slave community were with Phibbah's friends and relations, most of whom were women. Phibbah herself was probably Thistlewood's greatest single source on the activities of the slave community. While it is hard to establish exactly how much Phibbah would have known, it is likely that she had a significant amount of knowledge about the activities of the slave community. The position which she held in the slave community gave her access to information about the activities of the slaves, and her lifetime of slavery gave her the knowledge to interpret the significance of cultural beliefs and events to Thistlewood. Indirect information was also likely to be from female slaves as they comprised the largest percentage of house slaves, therefore they were the slaves Thistlewood was most likely to overhear gossiping as they went about their work. It is hard to gauge how much Thistlewood gained from the slaves through direct reporting and how much he merely heard or observed. It seems likely that the slaves tried to keep many of their activities from Thistlewood, rather than risk possible interference.

At an early stage in Thistlewood's life in Jamaica he began to identify the various ethnic groups that comprised the slave community. One way which he used, during his first years in Jamaica, as an aid to memory in identifying the groups was to record the ethnic origin of the women with whom he had a sexual encounter. For example, on 17 August 1751

Att night, cum Betty, Coromantee, or Gold Coast negroe⁴

As time goes by Thistlewood no longer records the ethnic origin of his conquests, but simply records their name. This could indicate that he no longer felt the need to distinguish between the separate groupings amongst his slaves, or, that it was now second nature to him to recognise the differences, and, therefore that there was no need to record the women's origin.

⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/1 Friday 17 August 1750 p.360

Thistlewood's diary, in general, contains a lack of explicit information about the slave community and culture. This reflects the non paternal nature of Thistlewood's attitude towards his slaves which resulted in Thistlewood's having a general lack of interest in the non-productive aspect of slaves lives. This meant that he rarely interfered with the workings of the community, or put a stop to cultural practices that he did not view as countermanding his authority or causing a disturbance within the slave community. By operating in this way, Thistlewood hoped to create a workforce that would work hard during those hours of productive labour, in the knowledge that, once their work was done, the slaves' time was their own. This contrasts with the attitude and behaviour of the Southern planter James Hammond who carefully designed a plan of physical and psychological domination in the hope of undermining black community and culture. Hammond believed this would break black solidarity and in so doing make his slaves a more compliant workforce.⁵

The contrasting attitudes between Thistlewood and Hammond reflect the differences in the management style, not only between these two slave owners, but between Jamaica and the American South in general. The more industrial model that the Jamaican slave owners operated meant that the profit motive dominated their interest in slaves activities. In contrast, slave owners in the American South saw their slaves not only as workhorses, but also as 'children' who needed 'parental guidance' in all areas of their life. They attempted to remove those areas of slaves' lives which they could not dominate. The attitudes of the planters was influenced by the population balance. In Jamaica slaves well outnumbered white people, so it was harder for slave owners to impose their will on the slave community. This meant that whites lived in a predominantly African culture, resulting in whites engaging in a limited cultural exchange with

⁵ Faust. DG "Culture Conflict and Community: The Meaning of Power on an Ante-Bellum Plantation." The Culture and Community of Slavery. Finkleman. P (ed). Garland Pub Inc New York, 1989 pp.87-103 p.89

slaves.⁶ While slaves had some white traditions imposed upon them, whites adopted some slave cultural activities, such as a taste for slave food, some slave sport and some slave language patterns⁷ and incorporated them into the new white Jamaican culture. This can be seen in Thistlewood's diary. For example, in December 1751 Thistlewood comments on the white Creole pronunciation.

#The Creoles in Jamaica usually pronounce a Water melon Water Million.⁸

In the American South, however, whites outnumbered blacks, and therefore it was easier to impose their will and attempt to stamp out African culture and replace it with European ideas and behaviour.

Despite any deficiencies the diary may have it does allow us to look at the nature of the community and family among his slaves. The largest percentage of the references concerning inter-slave relations concern disturbances or disputes in the slaves community, which annoyed Thistlewood or where he was called on to adjudicate. These include incidents such as

Plato catch'd Jackie & mn: Lucy, last night, and complained to me⁹

This sort of incident was common during Thistlewood's years at Egypt. This suggests that while Thistlewood generally did not interfere with the slave community he was used by the slaves as an adjudicator if they were unable to settle their differences amicably themselves. It is hard to establish whether Thistlewood was used in this way because he was considered a fair arbitrator, or as a last resort when the dispute could not be settled any other way.

⁶ Hall. N "Slaves Use of their "Free" Time in the Danish Virgin Islands in the Late Eighteenth Century and Early Nineteenth Century." Caribbean Slave Society and Economy: A Student Reader. H. McD Beckles & B. Shepherd. Kingston. 1991. pp.335-344 p343

⁷ Hall. N "Slaves Use of their "Free" Time in the Danish Virgin Islands in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century." p.343

⁸ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/2 Sunday 8 December 1751 p.272

⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/11 Wednesday 20 February 1760 p.34

The diary does not provide evidence to support the assertion of many historians that there was a strict hierarchy from domestics and artisans at the top down to the field workers at the bottom. Within the slave community there appears to be a fluidity or mixing between domestics, artisans, and field slaves. This fluidity is especially true of the time that Thistlewood spent at the Penn, 1767-1786, where the slave numbers were relatively small. This does not preclude the development of a small elite, which spanned several estates, and which was made up largely of drivers, head domestics, and some artisans. These slaves gained their status because of their ability to accumulate wealth and move freely around the district, as these were the attributes that were highly prized in the slave community. This meant that artisans and domestics, who had the ability to earn income not only through their provision grounds, but also by using their skills for financial return, were most likely to be part of this elite. This group included people such as Phibbah, Mountain Lucy, and House Franke. This group was the most likely to have livestock, horses, and other assets which not only gave them status, but also wealth.

The ability of the women in this small elite to buy clothes and live a reasonable lifestyle made them more attractive to white men. Consequently a large percentages of this elite were involved in relationships with white men. In some ways this separated them from the rest of the slave community, as by consorting with white men they were learning and adopting some of the attitudes and behaviour of the white community. It would seem, however, that while the women improved their own position, and in many ways attempted to emulate white behaviour, they managed to remain part of the slave community. The key to their success within the slave community was that they appeared to use their position not to alienate themselves from the rest of the slaves and become "white" but to assist the rest and mediate between them and the masters on their behalf. Thus, through skill they gained the slaves respect and devotion, rather than their envy and hatred. For example, in 1755 Phibbah spoke to Thistlewood on behalf of London who had runaway

last night had some Words with Phibbah and (She was very saucy) abt: Shewing me London who wanted to come home. To day noon I also had some discourse with Mrs Cope about him - Phibbah has took her things out of my house while I was away this morning, and has not come since.¹⁰

Phibbah returned to Thistlewood on the tenth of July after London had returned. London, interestingly, was not punished for running away, but was put in the hothouse to recover from previous whip wounds that had become infected. This suggests that Phibbah was prepared to risk her own position to assist a fellow slave. It may also suggest that she recognised how much Thistlewood needed her, and was prepared to manipulate this to her own advantage, and on this occasion she appears to have been successful.

The slave community was divided into family units. The status of these households and the nature of familial relationships, within these households, has been the subject of debate from the eighteenth century until today.¹¹ The nature of slave marriage and morality was the subject of contemporary and current debate. A Eurocentric bias has often led to misconceptions over the nature of the slave family, marriage and morality. These have generally occurred because of a lack of conceptual flexibility in notions that Europeans held about marriage which suggested that monogamous partnerships and nuclear units were the only acceptable form of marriage.¹² Many contemporary accounts imply that slave marriage and morality did not exist, or if it did it was only in the form of polygamy. The historian Edward Long promoted these concepts, and believed that slaves were incapable of 'civilised' marriage, but were instead devoted to immoral and uncommitted relationships.

They (slaves) laugh at the idea of marriage, which ties two persons together indissolubly. Their notions of love are, that it is free and transitory.¹³

¹⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Sunday 6 July 1755 p.147

¹¹ Fogel and Engerman "Recent Findings in the Study of Slave Demography." Sociology and Social Research. LXIII (1979) pp.566-589. pp.578-580

¹² Davies. A "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves." p.8

¹³ Long. E A History of Jamaica. London 1776. vol 2 p.415

It suited European purposes to promote this view. Planters used it to justify their behaviour in separating families and/or taking women as sexual partners, and abolitionists also used these notions to support their claim that slavery was detrimental to the well being of the slaves.¹⁴ Contemporary Europeans, however, contradicted themselves in the 1789 Official Enquiry into the Slave Trade when the Jamaican Assembly conceded that while no legal forms of marriage existed for slaves, many cohabited together by mutual consent. They went on to acknowledge that while couples often separated with little ceremony, many couples lived and grew old together, and that a strong family attachment prevailed among the slaves.¹⁵

Historians have continued the debate over the nature of the slave family. Research has shown that families did exist within the slave community and that family structures varied.¹⁶ Until the mid twentieth century it was commonly reported that polygamy was the dominant family structure. Higman, however, in his study of the slave family has gone to great lengths to prove the existence of the nuclear family model.¹⁷ A more balanced appraisal suggests that there were elements of African and European family structures within slave society. Beckles suggests that the emphasis of the two elements changed as the slave society matured and became more Creolised.¹⁸

The character of the individual households and family structures in which Thistlewood's slaves lived are hard to discover, because Thistlewood's inventory, like other inventories, rarely identifies husband and wives. In his slave lists at the start of each year Thistlewood clearly identified mother and child relationships,

¹⁴ Bush. B "The Family Tree is Not Cut: Women and Cultural Resistance in Slave Family Life in the British Caribbean." In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro American History. G. Okiihiro (ed) University of Massachusetts Press Amherst, 1986. p.118

¹⁵ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.99-100

¹⁶ Craton. M "Changing Patterns of Slave Families in the British West Indies." Journal of Interdisciplinary History. X 1979. pp.1-35 p.25

¹⁷ Higman. B W Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica 1807-1834. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1984.

¹⁸ Beckles. H McD Natural Rebels p.116

especially when the children were young, but failed to recognise other familial bonds. This does not mean such bonds did not exist, and the comments he makes throughout the diary suggests that most of the slaves entered into partnerships at one time or another with slaves both on and off their own property. Another source within the diary of the family formations amongst Thistlewood's own slaves was when he allocated cooking pots in 1767:

also gave iron potts, to the following nig: Abba & Sally 1. x Lincoln & Sukey 2. x dick & bess 3. x Solon & maria 4. x cudjoe & caesar 5. x Cubbah & Peggy 6. x pompey & Chub 7. x Mirtilla & Franke 8. x Johnnie 9. x damsel, phoebe, nanny & Jimmy not served till after ¹⁹

and provision grounds in 1770:

This morning shared the lime kiln provision ground amongst my nigroes they struck a line from the south most site p=0 to a young alligator pear tree in abbas line /abbas ground remains the same, beginning at the stake, south side 1. Jimmy, damsel, bess & Sally 2. Lincoln & Sukey 3. Solon & maria 4. dick & mirtilla 5. Franke & phoebe - north side returning 6. peggy 7. cudjoe and chub 8. nanny 9. Caesar 10. Coobah & pompey - gave the nigroes the rest of today, and tomorrow to plant and put their grounds in order²⁰

These two distributions give us some indication of the households that existed on the Penn. From these indicators it would appear that Lincoln and Sukey, and Solon and Maria, were couples who span the three year gap, and that Dick and Bess live as a couple in 1767 but by 1770 Dick had taken up with Mirtilla, and Coobah and Pompey have developed a relationship. The other adults do not appear to have formed partnerships on the Penn, but many were involved with a mate from a nearby Estate. In both 1767 and 1770 there were children listed in Thistlewood slave lists at the beginning of the year. They were not mentioned, however, in the allocation of either cooking pots or provision grounds. It is most likely that they were grouped with their mother and expected to share the pot, and to assist their mother in the provision ground. This would explain the distribution of

¹⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/18 Tuesday 29 September 1767. p233

²⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/21 Friday 19 October 1770 p.186

the provision grounds, Abba having her own as she had the most children to assist her, and to provide for. This meant Thistlewood felt she needed a whole plot to herself.

The sideline references that Thistlewood made suggest that most adult slaves had partners, even if couples were not always both resident on the same plantation. The evidence from Thistlewood's diary seems to follow the findings of Craton in his study of the Bahamas that slave families had a pronounced tendency to appear on larger isolated holdings, and that on smaller holdings close to other slave communities there were more likely to be disjointed family groups.²¹ This was for two reasons. First, the smaller numbers of slaves on small scale holdings meant that a slave on a small estate was less likely to find a suitable partner on the estate where she/he lived than a slave on a large plantation. The second reason was the proximity of other holdings which meant that travel to see a partner often involved only a short distance trip, thus allowing visits to be made on a regular basis between husband and wife or children. When Thistlewood was at Egypt it would appear that many slaves were able to find a mate on the plantation. However, with the slaves at the Penn being usually fewer than twenty adults in number, slaves were more likely to find a mate outside the Penn. Thistlewood recognised this in 1770 when he included the husbands of his slave women, who lived off the Penn in his Christmas hand outs.

also gave Neptune, lewie & harry a bottle among them,
being husbands to phoebe, Franke & damsel - Lewie made
me a present of 7 crabbs²²

Thistlewood has little to say about the structure of families within Egypt plantation and Breadnut Island Penn. He certainly did little to encourage or discourage the existence of any particular pattern developing. This seems contrary to the belief of Patterson that masters discouraged the development of

²¹ Craton. M "Changing Patterns of Slave Families in the British West Indies."
pp.10-11

²² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/21 Tuesday 25 December 1770 p.229

nuclear families.²³ It is reasonable to assume that the slaves with whom Thistlewood came into contact, like slaves throughout the Caribbean, strove to re-establish the familial patterns that they brought with them from West Africa. This meant a two generation pattern developed. The first generation's response to the new setting was to establish fictive kinship networks²⁴. By the second generation slaves could develop extended family networks based on blood ties and provision grounds.²⁵ The fictive links of the first generation were based on place of origin, ship mates, and adoption by established slaves.²⁶ There is evidence in Thistlewood's diary that all these links existed among his slaves. In 1767 when Cudjoe is sick he went to Canaan to be with his countryman, implying that his countryman, like a family member would care for him.

gave Cudjoe a Tickett to go to his countryman's again to Canaan for another week²⁷

When mulatto Will is dying the evidence of ship mate links can be seen in his wishes as to how his things are to be disposed on his death

Wrote a memorandum, how mulatto=Will's goods are to be disposed of at his Death: his wives shipmate Silvia to have his cow, her daughter hester yl: heiffer . . . ²⁸

Thistlewood also practised putting new arrivals with older more established slaves when they were adjusting. This process, while convenient for the planters also became an important element in cultural continuity with Africa in the community as newcomers brought news of Africa with them and refreshed African cultural practices.²⁹

²³ Patterson. O The Sociology of Slavery. London, 1967 p.167

²⁴ Fictive kin links, means those which are not derived from blood, but slaves created among themselves as a substitute for blood relatives.

²⁵ Craton. M "Changing Patterns of Slave Families in the British West Indies." pp.26-27

²⁶ Mullin. M Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean 1736-1831. University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1992. p.161

²⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/18 Monday 20 April 1767 p.103

²⁸ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/9 Tuesday 21 March 1758 p.23

²⁹ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.105

Second generation slaves, in Jamaica, continued to have fictive kin but they began to have a group of blood relatives with whom they had the highest level of association. For example, Phibbah was a Creole, therefore at least second generation Jamaican, and she had contact not only with her son and daughter

Phibbah's Coobah over here to day and her mulatto child, a girl named Nanny³⁰

but with her sister Nancy

At Night Phibbah's sister Nancy come ffrom Salt River to see her, I gave her yl: two Bitt punch Bowl I bought the other day.³¹

The links between family groupings were maintained through regular contact between slaves not only by visits, but also through gift giving. Family links were sometimes recognised by slaves in their naming practises. By giving their children names that linked them to the extended family unit they connected their children with the past and provided them with a sense of identity and history.³² Slaves not only gave children the names of ancestors, but also linked family members of the same generation by giving them the same name. This meant on a plantation that there could be more than one slave with the same name. To eliminate this the names were modified to include words such as big and little, or place of origin. It is hard to determine whether slaves were named by their masters, or chosen from within the slave community. It seems clear that Thistlewood named at least some of his slaves himself. For example, when he bought his first slave Lincoln he noted "Named him Lincoln."³³ Clearly this name is derived from Thistlewood's home county of Lincolnshire. Even if masters were responsible for naming some of their slaves, Inscoc's study of Carolinian slave names suggest that slave perpetuated family names

³⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Sunday 12 February 1769 p.28

³¹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Friday 24 January 1755 p.16

³² Cody. C A "There was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations Slave Naming Practices in the South Carolina Low Country, 1720-1865." The Culture and Community of Slavery. P Finkelman (ed). Garland Pub Inc, New York, 1989. pp.15-48 p.25

³³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/7 Saturday 3 January 1756 p.2

whether they originated from the master or not.³⁴ This seems to be true for Thistlewood because while he may have named some of the slaves he purchased he does not seem to have influenced the names of all his bought slaves nor the names of the children that were born. This would suggest that some familial links existed on the Egypt and Paradise Estates (both owned by John Cope) with names such as Mountain Lucy and Egypt Lucy, Big Mumber and Little Mumber.

It was widely believed by whites that slaves practised polygamy which whites regarded as an uncivilised form of marriage. It is true that polygamous family structures were part of African cultural traditions and, therefore, it is likely slaves would attempt to adopt this form of family structure in the West Indies.³⁵ As polygamy was an African tradition it may suggest that the more Creolised the slaves became the more likely slaves were to develop European nuclear family models.³⁶ This is hard to assess from the diary. Nevertheless, other studies have shown that this does not necessarily follow, with Africans just as likely to adopt a nuclear family model, and Creole men just as likely to have many wives.³⁷

There are two types of slave relationship which contemporary whites could have misinterpreted as polygamy. It seems probable that both these types of situations occurred among Thistlewood's slaves. The first is that extended kin networks, both fictive and real, were misinterpreted by whites as polygamous marriages.³⁸ This could have been the case with the statement by Edward Long

They are all married (*in their way*) to a husband, or wife, *pro tempore*, and have other family connexions, in almost every parish throughout the island; so that one of them,

³⁴ Inscocoe, J. "Carolinian Slave Names: An Index to Acculturation." The Culture and Community of Slavery. P Finkelman (ed) Garland Pub Inc, New York, 1989. pp.163-190 p.179

³⁵ Beckles, McD H Natural Rebels p.117

³⁶ Beckles, McD H Natural Rebels p.116

³⁷ Craton, M "Changing Patterns of Slave Families in the British West Indies." p.26

³⁸ Bush, B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.97

perhaps, has six or more husbands, or wives, in several different places; by this means they find support, when their own lands fail them; and houses to call and refreshment, whenever they are on their travels³⁹

Thistlewood rarely dwells on the 'marital status' or family connections of his slaves, but it is certain that many were involved with a web of people which extended across the district. Neither does Thistlewood pass judgement on the nature of the relationships that existed between his slaves. The exact nature of these relationships cannot be precisely identified. However, while some slaves were undoubtedly involved in polygamous relationships most of these connections were more likely to be kin rather than marital based. The visits that Thistlewood records between slaves are likely to be the tip of the iceberg as he concentrates his entries on visits by, and visitors to Phibbah. The non reporting of the travels of other slaves is not evidence that it does not happen. The fact that slaves found partners away from their own Estate, and that Thistlewood records issuing large numbers of passes to slaves to travel the district unimpeded, is evidence that travelling between estates occurred among all slaves.

The second area that whites commonly cited as evidence of polygamous relationships among slaves was what whites perceived as sexual instability and promiscuity, especially among the younger slaves. However, under African cultural practice serial monogamy was acceptable at certain times in the life cycle, and slaves could live in trial marriages without being considered promiscuous.⁴⁰ In some African cultures a marriage was not confirmed until there were children born from the relationship. Serial monogamy does appear to have existed among Thistlewood's slaves, especially among the young who seem to have many partners before settling down. This type of behaviour can be seen in the actions of House Franke, one of Phibbah's friends and a respected house slave

³⁹ Long E History of Jamaica. vol 2 p.415

⁴⁰ Brown. SE "Sexualty and the Slave Community." Phylon. vol 42. no 1. March 1981. pp.1-10 p.6

hear house Franke at Paradise is about making a match with a carpenter nigroe named Jack, who has worked with mr Charles cook a good while: to free herself from being troubled by driver Quashie and mulatto davie.⁴¹

Franke had previously been linked to these two men but was now ready to settle down with Jack, a third suitor. There was no stigma attached to her for having been involved with other men, and her status remained high and her character untarnished as a result.

The bonds that existed between slave men and women were frequently tested, not only by their inability to determine their own existence, but often by their inability to protect one another from white masters. This included not only protection from punishment, but for husbands to keep their wives away from the sexual advances of white men. This must have been particularly frustrating to the slave men under Thistlewood's care, as both Thistlewood and his white workmates were persistent in their pursuit of slave women. There are, however, incidents of slave men fighting back:

Robert⁴² was some shot in liquor last night Seemingly, had yl: hiccough exceeding, sent for Quasheba who could not come her husband being in the way . . . ⁴³

Despite these frustrations, the role the family and marriage played in the slaves lives was important as it provided them with an alternative source of strength and identity to that which the master provided. While the exact function the family played in the life of the slaves is hard to establish from the diary, there is likely that kinship enabled slaves to find the strength to survive the rigours of their everyday life.⁴⁴

On a more practical level the extended family formed the basic unit of society and provided a way in which young and old were cared for by the wider community. The respect that was given to the elderly meant that the older generation played an important

⁴¹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Monday 8 May 1769 p.86

⁴² Robert Lawrence, book keeper at Egypt from July 1759 to early 1760.

⁴³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/10 Monday 5 November 1759 p.208

⁴⁴ Bush. B "The Family Tree is Not Cut." p.117

role in the upbringing of slave children.⁴⁵ Another important function of the family was to provide economic assistance to its members. They assisted each other when crops failed and worked as a unit to ensure the success of its provision grounds. Property became an indication of the strength of kinship ties among slaves, and the common family property became its symbol of family unity and continuity.⁴⁶ This meant that the provision ground and the home yard became the focal point of family activity, not only because it provided a livelihood for them, but because it was a way of demonstrating that links between them were strong. The extended family also served as an effective cover for runaways, offering protection for its members despite the threat of heavy punishment for harbouring them. This was certainly the case in Thistlewood's diary with many running away not only to extended family, but to their husbands and wives on other plantations

In the evening had Easter, hazat's Wiffe ffetched from the negroe house and fflogged for harbouring at her house (mrs Appleby's) last week.⁴⁷

Slave owners recognised this behaviour and cited strong emotional bonds within families as being principally responsible for successful runaway attempts.⁴⁸ In acknowledging this, whites were contradicting their belief that slave families were unimportant and weak. In so doing, they were undermining their own racist ideology.

Thistlewood's respect for marriage and family bonds can be assessed in three ways. The first is through the level of separation through sale of families that occurred on Thistlewood's property. This was extremely minimal. Thistlewood rarely sold slaves, and those whom he did sell seem to be relatively free of attachments on his property. He sold his slave Coobah on 18 May 1774.⁴⁹ At the time she does not appear to have a partner amongst his slaves, and her daughter Silvia had

⁴⁵ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.105-106

⁴⁶ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.107

⁴⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/9 Saturday 12 July 1758 p.125

⁴⁸ Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels p.120

⁴⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/25 Wednesday 18 May 1774 p.96

died in March 1768.⁵⁰ Therefore, she was free of family connections.

The second way Thistlewood's attitude can be assessed is through the level of contact the slaves were able to have with their family members off the Estate. This can be assessed through looking at the number of tickets or passes Thistlewood issued to his slaves to travel to other plantations without risking punishment. During 1766, his last full year at Egypt, he issued 1333 tickets.⁵¹ This suggests that a high level of movement was approved by Thistlewood. Two years later, 1768, Thistlewood's first full year of the Penn, only 48 tickets⁵² were issued. The smaller number of slaves accounts for some of this decrease, as there were only 27 slaves on Thistlewood's property including children. However, there also seems to be proportionately fewer tickets issued. The smaller numbers do not seem to reflect a change in policy as there were still slaves moving off and on his estate, but it may be that the smaller number of slaves meant that Thistlewood could keep track of his slaves easily without having to issue them with a pass. In general, Thistlewood does not appear to wish to prevent the movement of his slaves between neighbouring plantations to see friends and family. In this respect Thistlewood could be seen as encouraging familial bonds. One example of this came in 1767 when Thistlewood moved to the Penn. He allowed Mirtilla to remain at Egypt with her husband driver Johnnie until the fifteenth of December when she was returned to the Penn due to the pair causing a disturbance.

recd a note from mr John hartnole, by dover, who brought home Mirtilla, she having been fighting with her husband driver Johnnie, at Egypt last night.⁵³

The final way we can assess Thistlewood's attitude towards slave marriage is in his choice of sexual partners. There is evidence that he took little notice of these liaisons when picking

⁵⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/19 Wednesday 16 March 1768 p.48

⁵¹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/18 Thursday 1 January 1767 p.5

⁵² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Sunday 1 January 1769 p.3

⁵³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/18 Tuesday 15 December 1767 p.278

his own prey⁵⁴. Nevertheless, Thistlewood contradicts this stance by reprimanding a white underling for trying to form a relationship with a slave woman already attached to a slave man.

Quamina catch'd Quasheba with the white man James;
reprimanded James, but he is in liquor, and very obstinate
and silly.⁵⁵

The status of slave women within the slave family has often been portrayed as a powerful one, with the word matriarchy emerging as a way of identifying patterns and control within the family. This has largely been the result of the concern, by historians, with the reduction of male authority within the slave family.⁵⁶ This concept has been developed in the Jamaican context by Orlando Patterson who claimed that one of the "major indignities"⁵⁷ of slavery was the reduction of male authority. This has often led historians to polarise the roles of men and women within the family suggesting that the women were domineering and all important, and the men were insignificant in either the control or nurturing of the family unit. However, recent studies show that the "dichotomy of the domineering woman and the emasculated man slave is an oversimplification."⁵⁸ Thistlewood's diary also seems to debunk the idea that sex roles were polarised within the family. This does not mean that female headed households did not exist. The practice of polygamy, existence of common law wives to white men, separation through death or sale, and the existence of marriages across plantation borders meant that women headed many households. The presence of this type of family, however, does not signify the existence of a matriarchy, as this concept implies power to women in a system where there are stable kinship structures and the mother is the supreme authority

⁵⁴ For example see Chapter 4 p.80

⁵⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/12 Wednesday 21 October 1761 p.257

⁵⁶ Lebsock. S "Free Black Women And the Question of Matriarchy: Petersburg, Virginia, 1784-1820." Women and the Family in a Slave Society. P.Finkelman (ed) Garland Pub Inc, New York, 1989. pp.277-298 p.279

⁵⁷ Patterson. O Persistence, Continuity and Change in the Jamaican Working-Class Family." Journal of Family History. Summer 1982 pp.135-161. p.141

⁵⁸ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.122

figure.⁵⁹ These concepts are not supported by the evidence from Thistlewood's diary or by other recent research on the nature of plantation life. There are several examples in the diary of slave men exerting their authority over their wives by preventing them from having sexual liaisons with other slave men, and to a more limited extent with white men. While the power black men had over his wife and children may have been limited, it was not absent.

The image of the woman as the bedrock of the family has been reinforced by an emphasis on women's role as child bearers and socialisers. These roles tied women to the family, and at the same time marginalised men's role within the family.⁶⁰ The tendency by planters, including Thistlewood, to rarely identify paternity has effectively obscured the level of involvement men had in their families. However, there is also growing evidence that shows that, even though fathers had minimal legal rights over their children, they showed great pride and affection towards their offspring.⁶¹ This is supported by Thistlewood in his diary. He occasionally recognised paternity and the bonds that existed between the father and his children. When Old Tom died at Egypt Thistlewood records

gave Quacco a little Rum, and Sugar upon Acct: of his father⁶²

In doing this, Thistlewood recognised that Quacco was grieving the loss of his father, and therefore implies there were affectionate bonds between father and son. There is also evidence in the diary that where paternity was acknowledged Thistlewood expected men to be responsible for the welfare of his wife and children. This can be seen in an incident in 1759 when a slave child died.

⁵⁹ Davies. A "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves." p.84

⁶⁰ Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels p.116

⁶¹ Wilson. P Crab Antics: The Social Anthropology of English Speaking Negro Societies of the Caribbean. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1973. p.196

⁶² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/5 Tuesday 5 February 1755 p.29

In the morning little Agnes died. (Ambo & Betty's Child)
Flogged Ambo for Starving it, and not giving Betty a place
to live.⁶³

Thistlewood's diary along with other plantation records have confirmed the root of the patriarchal myth lies with the planters' emphasis on motherhood, and not from the slave need to perpetuate the female line.⁶⁴ This bias has been continued by later historians.

Thistlewood's diary tells us nothing about the domestic organisations of individual households on his estate. Other studies have shown that the role of the slave woman within the family can be seen to have close parallels with that of the peasant woman in pre industrial Europe.⁶⁵ Slave women were seen by their own community as separate but equal to men in a society where all members made a vital contribution to the family economy. This meant that women had considerable influence over the domestic sphere. Within this context the keystone to all relationships was the mother child relationship and not that of the husband and wife. This in turn enabled women to play a strong role in the wider community.⁶⁶

The roles which men and women played within their own home mirrored European culture where the women cooked, cleaned and cared for the children and the sick. While the African man could not exert the same level of authority over his wife as the white man he did have a higher status than a woman within the home.⁶⁷ The work which women undertook, however, in the domestic sphere in their roles as wives and mothers could not be claimed directly by the master.⁶⁸ This meant it was possible for women to turn around the traditional badge of female oppression and

⁶³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/10 Thursday 12 July 1759 p.125

⁶⁴ Beckles. McD H Natural Rebels p.116

⁶⁵ Bush. B "The Family Tree is not Cut." p.121

⁶⁶ Bush. B "The Family Tree is not Cut." p.121

⁶⁷ Hooks. B Ain't I A Woman p.44

⁶⁸ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.98

create meaningful labour that provided the foundation for some autonomy and in itself became a form of resistance.⁶⁹

Just as many whites condemned slaves for not being capable of morality and monogamy, so too slaves were condemned for lacking parental solicitude and parenting skills.⁷⁰ Women, as primary care givers to children, were targeted in particular as having neglected their maternal responsibilities in favour of trivial pleasures.⁷¹ This was largely a result, not of slave women being bad mothers, per se, but of their behaviour did not conforming to eighteenth century white standards. Slave women's behaviour was based on their own cultural heritage which decreed that children belonged to the whole community and not just to their biological parents. This meant that the community, not parents alone, had the collective responsibility to show a child affection and teach it discipline.⁷² Their cultural heritage also suggested that babies be ritually neglected for the first nine days, not because they were bad parents, but because until that time had passed children were not considered part of this world. Thistlewood does not seem to ascribe to the philosophy that slave women were bad mothers, and pays very little attention to the parenting ability of his slaves in either a positive or negative way. He seems to have a degree of faith in slave women's ability and gave women time off work to care for their children when they were sick.

Little phibbah ill off a sore backside etc gave it physick,
nanny at home minding it.⁷³

This suggests Thistlewood believed that the mother was the best person for the job of taking care of her own children. The evidence that we can glean from the diary suggests that, contrary to the belief that slave women did not care, mothers did

⁶⁹ Davies. A "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves." p.87

⁷⁰ Green. C "Gender and Re/Production in British West Indian Slave Societies. Part 1: Reclaiming Women's Lives." Against the Current. Sept/Oct 1992 pp.21-27 p.34

⁷¹ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.103

⁷² Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.103

⁷³ Thistlewood. T Monsoon 31/21 Monday 9 July 1770 p.111

show a child affection and that strong bonds existed between mother and child despite the conditions of slavery.

Abba's Johnnie fainted /or had a fit/ His mother almost out of her senses⁷⁴

This morning sent Abba to Savanna la Mar with Johnnie to the doctor . . . but he died, before they got him home about 10 o'clock . . . Abba quite frantic & will hear no reason.⁷⁵

The behaviour and emotions that Abba displayed when she knew her son was dying, and dead were not those of an unfeeling woman, but one of a woman who is desperate about losing her child. This suggests that she cared deeply for her children, and did not take her maternal duties lightly. This attitude contradicts historians, such as Patterson,⁷⁶ who have said that slaves did not love their children, and had no desire to raise them under the conditions of slavery.

The most important aspect of women's lives within the slave community was their role as the bearers of tradition and the preservers of African values. Women were the primary agents in the maintenance of conventional behaviour not only within their own families but within the community at large.⁷⁷ This meant that women provided the key to cultural identity and survival, as they taught their children their African heritage and attempted, where possible to continue to operate in the way they had learnt from their mothers. The teaching of African culture and way of life promoted a separate consciousness among slaves and gave them a sense of pride and self worth. This could lead to resistance to European cultural impositions.⁷⁸ The role that women held in West African society equipped them to play a vital and indispensable role in the cultural life, and as such they participated fully in the cultural life of the slave community.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/22 Sunday 6 January 1771 p.7

⁷⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/22 Tuesday 8 January 1771 p.8

⁷⁶ Patterson. O The Sociology of Slavery. Chapter 4

⁷⁷ Terborg Penn. R "Black Women in Resistance." p.189

⁷⁸ Davies. A "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves." p.84

⁷⁹ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.153

Slave culture was a mixture of African and Creole elements. Slaves through the sheer force of circumstance, had to adapt their traditional cultural patterns to new social situations, but wherever possible slaves strove to re-establish their African heritage even when it meant resisting European impositions.⁸⁰ For example, slaves resisted European religion, few slaves converted to Christianity, preferring instead the African based forms of religious expression. Slave women were particularly reluctant to convert as Christian based marital vows took away independence from the women slaves that they had in regard to equal right in divorce.⁸¹ The cultural heritage of the slaves was preserved better in the West Indies than the American South where planters, unlike Thistlewood and his associates, tried to ban cultural activities because of a fear of slave subversion. In the West Indies also, the numerical advantage that blacks had over whites and the relative autonomy of their community meant they were able to channel their cultural beliefs in such a way that the dehumanising aspects of slavery were reduced.⁸² Cultural defiance took the form of song and language. Language remained a fundamental part of a slaves' identity, and was important to slave cultural unity. Slaves came from diverse areas of Africa, and, therefore, spoke a variety of African languages. In Jamaica these mixed with English and became a new Creole language. It acted as the first defence against depersonalisation, and was, therefore, a powerful form of resistance especially as the Creole language was rich with double entendre.⁸³

Thistlewood was generally not concerned with the culture of the slaves, and did little to prevent the slaves from developing a set of beliefs and practising their own ceremonies. In 1769 he reprimanded Phibbah's daughter Coobah for participating in Myall⁸⁴ dances

⁸⁰ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.87

⁸¹ Bush. B "The Family Tree Is Not Cut" pp.123-124

⁸² Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p.151

⁸³ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838 p158

⁸⁴ Myall religious practices were brought from Africa by the slaves and involved a form of group worship.

Egypt Lucy acquainted Phibbah privately that the myall dance has been held twice at Phibbah's coobah house, at Paradise estate by nigroes from Long Pond Estate, as also Egypt dago & Job who are both myal=men, attend these dancings⁸⁵

Reprimanded Coobah severely about the myal Affair⁸⁶

This reaction appears to be because of Coobah's relationship to Phibbah, and possibly was due to Phibbah's angst over the situation, and not because of a desire to stamp out all myall activity. This attitude contrasts sharply with that of James Hammond, who went to great lengths to stamp out traditional African culture and religious practices and beliefs among his slaves.⁸⁷ The lack of direct concern that Thistlewood had with this aspect of his slaves lives leads us to believe that rather than his slaves having few separate beliefs and practices, Thistlewood under reports these activities as they have no direct bearing on his prime interest in their lives. Thistlewood, therefore, reports only on activities that disturb him, or the smooth operation of the slave community in some way. He also reported on something when he encountered it for the first time. Consequently many references to slave song, dance, ceremonies and language come in the first few years that Thistlewood was in Jamaica. After 1753 reporting is scarce which had now become commonplace and unimportant to him.

Thistlewood does record some of his slaves' beliefs or folklore, especially when he first arrives. For example, in June 1750 he noted

When negroes are sick, their relations and friends usually give them, some very ugly new name, which they think may deter God Almighty from taking them, as they have such an ugly name.⁸⁸

Slaves in Jamaica brought with them from Africa two pagan religious traditions: Myall, which was concerned with group worship, and Obeah, that was worked by individual priests who

⁸⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Saturday 22 March 1769 p.50

⁸⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Sunday 16 April 1769 p.66

⁸⁷ Faust. DG "Culture, Conflict and Community." pp.90-91

⁸⁸ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/1 Saturday 23 June 1750 p.315

dealt with magic, poisons, and folk medicine.⁸⁹ It seems that both of these practices operated among Thistlewood's slaves. The incident with Phibbah's Coobah and the myall dances is evidence that this form of religious expression existed. The obeah or wise men also gave Thistlewood cause for consternation, especially when they worked to turn one slave against another, as slaves seek out their advice.

mr Wilsons Will /who is an obiah or bush man/ caught in Abbas house, at work with his obiah, about midnight last night and made her believe damsel is the occasion of her children being sick, & her miscarriage etc a sad uproar, took him home this morning with his obiah bag. mr Wilson flogged him well⁹⁰

On this occasion Thistlewood while always wary of the reputed power of the Obeah men, was not necessarily punishing the slave for participating in religious acts, but for disrupting the peace, and causing an uproar among his slaves.

Slaves also participated in numerous ceremonies. Funerals were particularly riotous affairs which involved singing and dancing. Women were important to the funeral service and participated fully in it, unlike the European ceremony in which the main participants were men. That this behaviour occurred is seen in the death of Old Tom

About 11am Old tom died, having been ill off a bad cold and cough ffor near a ffortnight past . . . The Negroes Singing most part of the Night at Old Tom's house⁹¹

To night old Tom was Buried, the Negroe Wenches Sung over him a long time . . . ⁹²

Thistlewood does not record the deaths of all slaves in such a detailed way. Most deaths were simply recorded as having died and been buried. It could be said that the mark of how important a slave was to Thistlewood was how much he recorded about their death and funeral. Funerals provided an opportunity for slaves to gather in large groups and spend time together without causing the white community undue cause for concern. This can

⁸⁹ Bush. B Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838. pp.73-74

⁹⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/31 Friday 28 December 1780 p.205

⁹¹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/5 Monday 4 February 1758 p.28

⁹² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/5 Tuesday 5 February 1758 p.29

be seen in the funeral for mason Quashe that clearly contravened slave law in allowing large groups of slaves to gather.

all last night and today, a vast company, with singing &c at the Negro house with Franke, for the loss of her husband, Quashe. She killed a heifer and several hoggs &c to entertain her company with. Delivered to Franke a jug of rum, 8 gallons or more⁹³

While slaves participated in a rich culture of their own, not all were proud to do so, for some knowledge of, and participation in, these activities became part of their oppression as it identified them as a slave and not a free person. There are incidents in Thistlewood's diary that reflect this attitude. It can be seen clearly in the wishes of Mulatto Will for his funeral.

he desires to be buried at Salt River at his mother (dinnah's) right hand, and that no Negroes should sing etc.⁹⁴

It would seem that even in death that Will, while recognising his African heritage by requesting to be buried with his African mother, aspired to be closer to the white than the slave community. It could be said that some women who formed long term relationships with white men were also rejecting their own culture. This type of behaviour has been identified in slave women throughout the West Indies who associated closely with white men. In Mullin's look at the Newton Estate in Barbados he identified this behaviour in the family of the head domestic Old Doll. Old Doll was a powerful women on the estate and ensured that her family dominated the house and artisanal positions, thus elevating them above the status of the field.⁹⁵ The women of the family largely consorted only with white men, thus through a systematic process of whitening their descendents they brought themselves physically closer to the whites. The only record in Thistlewood's diary of a conversion to Christianity by a slave was Phibbah's daughter Coobah in 1771

Hear Phibbah's Coobah has got herself christened at home.⁹⁶

⁹³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/18 Sunday 5 July 1767 p.165

⁹⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/9 Tuesday 21 March 1758 p.23

⁹⁵ Mullin. M Africa in America pp.97-98

⁹⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/22 Wednesday 13 November 1771 p.203

The conversion to Christianity was a rejection of the pagan religious practices of the slave community. Coobah had associated with white people on an intimate level, having accompanied Dorrill Cope to England in 1767, and had several white husbands. On her conversion she appears to have changed her name to Jenny Young. In doing this she was taking the title of a free European person consequently further distancing herself from the slave community. Slave mistresses were the most likely to adopt patterns of white behaviour as they were the closest to that culture. It is hard to assess the feelings of women in Thistlewood's diary towards their culture. They appear to still participate in the culture and community of the slaves, but at the same time they were likely to be the most Europeanised of the slaves. This meant they had a delicate balance to achieve so as not to alienate themselves from either group.

Thistlewood gained knowledge of the slave community and culture through both direct conversations with slaves and indirect hints through observations and overheard conversations. Women would have been particularly influential in this process, not only because of their high level of direct contact with him, but also because they were well represented in his household. The diary tells us that most adult slaves formed marital relationships, and that extended kin networks both real and fictive were a basic social unit within slave society. Within the family women remained the primary care giver but the role of men in the family was probably greater than previous studies have shown. Women were important members of the community not only because they were the primary care givers responsible for the physical and spiritual well being of the child, but also because they were primarily responsible for maintaining African and Creole culture in the community. This was an important role as it enabled slaves to provide an alternate set of values from the set the ruling European class imposed upon them. While not all slaves were proud to be members of the slave community, a set of networks existed to support and comfort

members through familial links and an embracing of African traditions.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The diary of Thomas Thistlewood provides us with an entree into the world of eighteenth century Jamaica. By following the everyday life of Thistlewood over a thirty seven year period, 1750-1786, we are able to build up a picture, not only of the life of one white man, but of the interaction that occurred within white society, between the white and slave communities, and to a lesser extent within the slave community. In doing this, we are able to widen the scope of our enquiry to the nature of the relations between the two communities. Slave women played an important role in the life of Thistlewood, as he did in theirs. Thomas Thistlewood interacted with slave women on three levels; as the master of workers, as a predator waiting to take advantage of any woman sexually, and, to a small number of women Thistlewood was a companion and friend. It is through these three types of interaction that we are able to gauge the role and status of slave women both within their own community and within Jamaican society as a whole.

The uncritical and mundane nature of the diary, as well as Thistlewood's candid reporting of his sexual relationships, suggest that it was written as a personal aid to memory, and not with publication in mind at the time of writing. This gives us reason to have a degree of faith in the reliability of its contents. It must never be forgotten, however, that the voice of the slaves is missing, and some of the events, therefore, are reported from a third party point of view. This means that there will always be gaps in our understanding as the attitudes, motivations and actions of the slaves cannot be accurately assessed. The selectivity of Thistlewood in his reporting of events also lead to gaps and many incidents are incomplete in their coverage. Having noted these problems, the diary does, however, provide us with a case study which enables us to build a picture of the relationships that existed between a master and his slaves, and

to a lesser extent those which occurred between the slaves themselves.

Eighteenth century Jamaican society was largely divided into two groups, white free and black slave. At first glance it appears that these communities were at opposing poles, with no interaction. Closer examination, however, proves this to be incorrect and there were several points at which the two communities intersected. Slave women were important to these intersections in three ways. They were the mistresses of white men, the mothers of mulatto children, and the principal commercial link between the two communities.

White men from all ranks in Jamaica indulged in sexual relationships with slave women. While their relationships functioned on many levels, it was the women with whom white men formed lasting relationships who became an important link between the two communities. Slave women who became the "wives" of white men were given elevated status by the whites, often becoming their master's housekeeper. They were often given gifts and lived a life of relative comfort compared to the rest of the slave community. This was true of Phibbah, Thistlewood's "wife". While she was already a domestic slave when Thistlewood began his relationship with her, her position at the top of the domestic ranks was confirmed by his attachment to her. This was especially true when Thistlewood became the master of his own property, as Phibbah ran the house for him single handed. The close contact that these women had with white men meant that cultural values and practices were passed between them. In this way this group of slave women became cultural mediators between the two communities. These women provided their white "husbands" with insights into the structures of the slave community and their cultural practices, thus giving their men a better understanding of the activities of the slave community. At the same time the proximity of these women to white society meant they were likely to be the slaves

who were most Europeanised.¹ They had the best command of the English language, and were likely to adopt European dress and other mannerisms. The women then filtered these ideas down to the rest of the slave community, who incorporated aspects of white culture into their own cultural practices. The slave "wives" of white men also mediated between the two communities through subtle pressure on the master to moderate his behaviour towards the slave community. This could be done both through general behaviour, or through pleading for a specific case. Phibbah often attempted to intercede on behalf of a slave, and asked Thistlewood for leniency.² While she was sometimes successful, on other occasions Thistlewood felt she had overstepped the line and was aggravated by her behaviour.³ Phibbah could make her feelings known to Thistlewood even more firmly by leaving his house and depriving him of her company. It seems certain that on several occasions Phibbah was successful in curbing Thistlewood's behaviour by this method.

The nature of the relationships that existed between slave women and their white "husbands" meant that women had a careful path to tread. The close relationship that these women had with white men could alienate them from the slave community, as the rest of the slave community could become suspicious of their behaviour and loyalties. At the same time their elevated status could be lost at any time by the whim of their master who had ultimate control over their position. In order to balance their position so that they were accepted by both communities, they had to identify to some degree with the needs and desires of both these forces. It would seem that Phibbah managed to tread the fine line, and kept a positive relationship with the slave community, as well as being influential in Thistlewood's life.

¹ Barash. C "The Character of Difference: The Creole Woman as Cultural Mediator in Narratives about Jamaica." Eighteenth Century Studies. 23. 1990.

pp.407-423 p.413

² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 Sunday 6th - Thursday 10th July 1755

pp.147-151

³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/11 Friday 17 January 1760 p.8

Mulatto children who were the product of these inter-racial relationships. They also forged a link between the two communities as they were physical evidence of white and black interaction. Mulatto people could be found among both the slave and free population. While white paternity did not guarantee manumission, mulattos were the largest group among the free black and coloured community. Those mulattos who were left in bondage were often elevated to a position away from the field, due to white notions that their white blood made them more suited to skilled labour in trades, and for positions in the house. Whites also believed that Mulattoes were the most likely to identify with their own aims and aspirations. Freed mulattos often found they were in an awkward position within Jamaican society, as while they were no longer owned, they did not enjoy full civil rights.⁴ This meant they were in limbo, both the slave and white communities being suspicious and jealous of their position. The ambiguous nature of the position of freed slaves can be seen in the life of Thistlewood's son John. He was manumitted, as a child, by Thistlewood and educated until his mid teens when he was apprenticed as a carpenter. Despite his free status, his most frequent companions were not white youths but young men of colour, both free and slave. Many of his activities continued to focus on the slave community. While this group of people found it hard to find a niche within Jamaican society they formed a vital link between the white and slave cultures. This was not only because they physically joined the two, but, because the recognition of paternity by white men may have led them to adjust the stereotypes they held about slave and African people, as they would not want to associate their own children with animalistic characteristics.

The third way the two communities intersected was by commercial activity in the internal market. Slave women, as the principal marketers, were the commercial intermediaries between the two communities. The provision ground system that operated in Jamaica, the success of slaves in turning the grounds

⁴ Heuman, G Between Black and White: Race, Politics and the Free Coloureds in Jamaica, 1792-1865. Clio Press, Oxford, 1981. pp.4 & 5

to a profit, and the lack of diversification among the whites meant that slaves dominated internal markets.⁵ This meant that the white community was reliant on the slave for their subsistence. Female slaves dominated the marketing side of the provision grounds. This was due not only to their African heritage in which women were the principal marketers, which meant they had developed skills and techniques in this area, but also to the compatibility of marketing with other female tasks such as childcare. This meant women and the white community engaged in commercial activity while slave men concentrated their efforts on the production of the provision ground.

While the diary shows that the two communities intersected, it also shows that the principal contact between the two communities was between dominant master and subserviant slave. The interaction between the two communities at this level was not static, nor was it a case of simple complete domination and subordination, but a subtle blend of domination, persuasion, accommodation and resistance.

Thistlewood's diary confirms the idea that Jamaican masters had little use for the paternal ethos so prevalent in the American South and instead operated a model of master slave relations close to that identified by Littlefield as the industrial model.⁶ This is reflected in the diary by most of the entries concerning the slaves relating to their work tasks and performances. As Thistlewood's prime interest in his slaves was their productive capabilities he had little interest in those aspects of his slaves' lives that did not directly influence this capability. This contrasts with the attitude of the planters in the American South who tried to influence every aspect of their slaves' lives. This did not mean that Thistlewood did not interfere at all in the slave community, but that he did so only when the slaves were

⁵ Green. C "Gender and Re/Production in the British West Indian Slave Societies, Part 1: Reclaiming Women's Lives." Against the Current. Sept/Oct 1992. pp31-37 p.37

⁶ Littlefield. D "Plantations, Paternalism, and Profitability Factors Affecting African Demography in the Old British Empire." Journal of Southern History. XLVII. 2. May 1981. p.169

causing a disturbance whether to himself or the rest of the slave community, or he felt that the slaves were directly countermanding his authority.⁷ The result of this attitude is that most of the references in the diary to the slave community concern disputes and disturbances.

The number of entries concerning the productive aspects of the slaves' lives mean that we are able to establish the nature of slaves' work and the allocation of positions to slaves. Thistlewood's diary confirms that while general field work was genderless, gender assumptions that created an image of a woman as incapable of handling authority meant that women were unable to rise to a position of authority, such as driver in the field. It also suggests that if a slave was able to escape the field, gender was also an important determinant in deciding the occupation of a slave, with male slaves dominating the trades and female slaves dominating the domestic and huckster occupations. Many historians have placed emphasis on the influence of colour and origin of birth in the elevation of slaves from the field, stating that both mulatto and Creole slaves were more likely to escape from the field. While it is not possible to establish this conclusively from Thistlewood, it seems from these examples where we can establish the origin of the slaves, that this has some truth in it.⁸ The range of occupations open to women was more limited than those available to men. This meant women had an economic disadvantage as positions away from the field provided slaves with the opportunity to market their skills to gain private return, as well as working on behalf of their master. However, one important position which was almost exclusively a female domain was huckstering, due to the white belief that women were more passive and trustworthy. Huckster women moved reasonably freely around the area selling and trading on behalf of their master. The position gave women advantages of freedom of movement which enabled them to keep in touch with other plantations, and gave them the skills and

⁷ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/31 Friday 28 December 1780 p.205

⁸ For example, Phibbah, House Franke and Paradise Coobah were all Creole, and Mulatto Davie was a Creole carpenter.

customer base to use when they sold their own goods from their provision grounds.

The other way that women could escape from the field was to enter the "house" as a domestic. The advantage of this position was not only relief from the drudgery of field work, but also the ability to use their skills to earn money on their own behalf. Many women did sewing, and washing in order to generate their own income. Many historians have assumed that domestic slaves separated themselves from the field workers and formed an elite class within the plantation. This is not borne out in Thistlewood's diary. Domestic workers did sleep in the kitchen, but they also had huts in the slave village to which they could retreat, and far from snubbing the slave community were active participants in its activities. On smaller estates, such as Thistlewood's own, Breadnut Island Penn, there was only one domestic slave and the other slaves spent time in the house according to health and the seasonal demands of the field work. This meant it was extremely unlikely, if not impossible, for an elite class to develop. The closest that a separate class can be identified in the diary, is one that spans the district and includes drivers, artisans and head domestics from several plantations. This group were given raised status not only because of the position the master gave them, but because of the extra money and freedom these positions allowed the slaves to obtain. This group were the most likely to be Europeanised, and the women often had partners within the white community. Even these slaves, however, participated in many slave activities. Phibbah could be identified as part of this group. She clearly had elevated status and mixed freely with slaves from the neighbouring estates. Her closest friends, and many of her relatives also held similar positions, and they interacted through gifts and visits on a regular basis. While she may have preferred the company of those in a similar position to herself she was respected within the wider slave community as she participated in slave ceremonies, aided the nursing of the sick⁹, and was

⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/21 FRiday 29 June 1770 p.103

prepared to help those in need¹⁰ . In this way, while enjoying the perks her position gave her, she identified with the interests of the slave community.

Production on behalf of the master was only half the productive picture for slaves. The work they conducted on their own behalf in the provision grounds, and their "free" time, completed the picture. These activities formed an important part of slave culture and gave slaves an area of their lives where they could develop self esteem and get some direct return for their labours. It is not clear from the diary what the internal organisation was or the exact profit levels slaves were able to gain from their own activities. It is clear, however, that Thistlewood's slaves engaged in the growing of produce, from food staples to flowers to medicinal herbs, tended livestock and fowls, hunted and gathered, and developed craft activities in order to generate income. Those slaves who had a trade, or who worked in the house were able to use the skills they had to earn extra money. While the exact level of profit is unclear, it would appear most of Thistlewood's own slaves possessed at least some fowls and/or livestock. There is also evidence in the diary that slaves were able to accumulate financial capital.¹¹ This confirms the idea that slaves were able to dominate the financial markets and so enter the import market.

In the area of production the majority of slaves were field slaves. This meant they had a similar set of experiences regardless of gender in this area of their lives, with only those who escaped field labour having production influenced by gender considerations. The area of slaves lives that were most influenced by gender were their sexual and reproductive lives. Sexual exploitation of women by their white masters provided another area in which the master could assert his power. Reproduction not only added to the physical burden of female slaves, but added extra responsibilities of childcare to their list of tasks.

¹⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/31 Saturday 25 March 1780 p.48

¹¹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Sunday 3 September 1769 p.153

Thistlewood's diary is great testimony to the sexual exploitation of slave women.¹² Thistlewood not only gave details about his own encounters, but also noted the sexual activities of his associates. While Thistlewood is not forthcoming about the level of consent he received from the women about his own advances, he records the forced attentions that his associates gave slave women.¹³ Slave men unable to prevent these types of attacks on their wives, mothers, daughters and sisters, felt frustrated and humiliated by these acts as they were a challenge to any authority they had over their women. In this way sexual exploitation can be seen as an attack not only against women, but the whole slave community.

A small group of women were able to make short term gains by making themselves available to white men on a regular basis. Through turning their exploitation to their advantage they were able to make small improvements to the lifestyle of both themselves and their families. These women, however, were still subject to the whims of the white master, who might use them regularly for a few months and then ignore them for some time. Despite these women trying to control the situation by making themselves available, they were still subject to punishment for non-compliance, if the white man so decided.

The only women who were able to make long term gains from sexual contact with white men were those women who entered into "marriages" with white men. They were removed from the rigours of field work, and kept in a style of relative comfort by their white "husbands". Even these women were not immune to the whim of the white man and at any time their position could be destroyed and the woman returned to the field. Phibbah made long term gains for herself and her son through her liaison with Thistlewood. She retained an important position for herself in the house, and was manumitted by him on his death. John, their

¹² See Appendices 1, Thistlewood alone had sexual relations with 85 women in the 10 years 1754-1764.

¹³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/6 12 March 1755 p.60

son, was saved from the brutalities of slavery by being manumitted by Thistlewood very young.

It could be debated whether long term relationships between white men and slave women were based on manipulation and self interest, or mutual affection and caring. In the case of Thistlewood and Phibbah, it is hard to tell, as there were advantages to both parties in having a relationship together. The exact nature of their relationship will never be known, as Thistlewood does not reflect on his feelings, and Phibbah's feelings are unknown. It is likely, however, that their relationship contained elements of both self interest and affection, with the balance between the two altering over time.

Slave women's life was distinct from slave men, not only because of their sexual exploitation, but, also because of their ability to have children. The low fertility rate among Jamaican slaves has long been the subject of historical debate. Thistlewood's diary confirms the findings of Kiple, that high infant mortality, rather than low fertility was the chief cause of Jamaican slaves being unable to maintain their numbers through reproduction.¹⁴ Thistlewood does not theorise about the high level of infant mortality, although his comments suggest that he, like other contemporaries, blamed poor midwifery for some infant deaths. The diary does confirm that the principal cause of infant death was lock jaw or jaw fall. It is likely one important reason for the number of infant deaths was the African belief that a baby was not part of this world for the first eight or nine days of life, therefore, babies were often ritually neglected during this period, and not considered to have lived if they died within it.

Another debate concerning slave fertility is the extent to which women were prepared to resist their master through depriving him of future slaves by performing abortions and infanticide. Thistlewood's diary, while it shows that slave women had a

¹⁴ Kiple. K The Caribbean Slave: A Biological History. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1984. p.117

knowledge of abortifacients¹⁵ does not record how regularly they were used. The high level of miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death make it difficult to determine the level of deliberate neglect or harm mothers inflicted on themselves or their babies. It is likely that some slave women deliberately terminated their pregnancies, or killed their babies, but there is evidence in the diary that mothers were attached to their children and did not wish them dead even if life meant coping with the rigours of slavery.¹⁶

Another area of historical debate has been the nature and structure of the slave community and culture. While Thistlewood's lack of interest in the private lives of his slaves meant that this area of the slaves lives is not well developed in the diary, the information we do have allows us to draw some conclusions about the nature of the slave community and culture and the attitudes the slaves had towards it. The structure of slave marriages has been debated from the eighteenth century to the present day with ideas about the extent of polygamy and monogamy conflicting. While it is hard to establish the exact nature of marital relations between slaves from the diary it would seem a variety of structures existed. Serial monogamy seems to have been a common pattern among the slaves, with slaves having several partners, especially when they were young, but settling into a more permanent relationship in their latter years. This pattern fits the West African pattern which accepted experimental marriages before settling on a partner. While some slaves were able to find partners on their own estate, others had partners in the surrounding district, whom they appear to have seen regularly from the flow of visitors, to and from both Egypt and Breadnut Island Penn, and from the number of tickets Thistlewood issued.

To widen the picture from marriage to kinship networks, it would appear from Thistlewood's diary, that far from being

¹⁵ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/8 Friday 17 July 1767. p.174

¹⁶ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/22 Sunday 6 January 1771 p.7

separated emotionally as Patterson has suggested,¹⁷ slaves operated an intricate web of kin links that spanned the district. Thistlewood's slaves fit the two generational pattern of family ties that Michael Craton identified, that the first generation of slaves established fictive kin links based on place of origin, shipmates, and adoption by established slaves.¹⁸ The second generation maintained these links, and developed new ones based on blood relationships, both across and between generations.

Historical research has often polarised the roles slave women and men within the slave family. Women are characterised as all powerful matriarchs and men as unimportant bystanders. The evidence from Thistlewood's diary suggest, however, that while women were the principal caregivers, fathers were not incidental in their children's lives. Fathers appear to have played an important role in both providing for, and nurturing their children, moreover, masters expected slave men to assume responsibility for their families in this way.¹⁹ The bonds that fathers formed with their children often lasted until adulthood.²⁰ Contemporaries often believed that slaves were bad parents who did little to care for their children. Later historians followed this line of argument claiming that the rigours of slavery prevented mothers, as primary caregivers, from developing close bonds with their children, and they therefore lacked parenting skills. Thistlewood's diary clearly demonstrates that mothers developed strong attachments to their children, and were heartbroken when one died.²¹ Thistlewood never comments on the parenting skills of his adult slaves, but the fact that he entrusts the care of sick children to their mothers suggest that he had faith in their abilities.

¹⁷ Patterson. O Slavery and Social Death. A Corporate Study. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1982. pp.7-8

¹⁸ Craton. M "Changing Patterns of Slave Families in the British West Indies." Journal of Interdisciplinary History. X 1979 pp.1-35. pp.26-27

¹⁹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/10 Thursday 12 July 1759 p.125

²⁰ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/5 Tuesday 5 February 1755 p.29

²¹ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/22 Tuesday 8 January 1771 p.8

Slave culture and the level to which slaves participated in it, is hard to establish from the diary. The little we are able to glean from the snippets Thistlewood has provided is that slaves did participate in a separate culture from that which the Europeans imposed upon them. Slave culture was a combination of African, European and Creole elements and was expressed through song, story²², religion²³ and participation in ceremonies²⁴. It is widely believed by feminist historians that slave women were the principal disseminators of slave culture.²⁵ While the diary does not specifically address this issue, as principal care givers it is likely that women on Thistlewood's estate bore this responsibility. This role gave slave women an important and positive position within the slave community, as a separate cultural identity from whites gave slaves a measure of self worth and the ability to resist the advances of the master.

Not all slaves were, however, proud of their slave culture or African heritage. Some slaves strove to separate themselves from the rest of the slave community and became more Europeanised. The women who formed close relationships with white men, and mulatto slaves were the most likely to develop these feelings. It is unclear from the diary the level of Europeanisation of the female slaves. From the little knowledge we have, however, it would appear that slave mistresses were the most likely to adopt English mannerisms, language and religion. But, most did this while retaining element of slave culture and their African identity. This meant they could move with some degree of ease between the two communities.

In assessing the nature of the slave women's place and role within Jamaican society I proposed three hypotheses which now need to be tested. The first was that while Thistlewood, and other slave owners kept women slaves primarily for their

²² Thistlewood. T Monson 31/9 Saturday 17 September 1768. p.161

²³ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/20 Saturday 22 March 1769 p.50

²⁴ Thistlewood. T Monson 31/18 5 July 1767 p.165

²⁵ For example see Davies. A "Reflections on the Black Woman's role in the Community of Slaves." Massachusetts Review. 13. Winter 1972. pp.81-103 p.84

economic productive function, that it was through their sexual function that slave women were able to gain some form of bargaining power to use in their relationship with their master. This hypothesis has proved to be true in some cases but not for the majority of the slave women. The sexual relationship that Thistlewood entered into with most of the women was not sufficient in time or quantity to provide the women with any benefits of leverage over Thistlewood. A small group of women could make short term benefits from sexual encounters with Thistlewood, by making themselves available to him, but even these women were not able to make sufficient gains to have any lasting bargaining power over their master. The group of women for whom this hypothesis was true, was the slave women who became the "wives" of white men. They gained status and financial reward from their liaisons with white men. Through subtle pressure and the withdrawal of their services they were able to exert some influence over their masters, and in so doing they could attempt to improve the conditions for the rest of the slaves.

The second hypothesis I proposed was that through the strong relationships some women developed with their masters they were able to gain entry into the wider Creole society in a way that was not available to men. This has proved to be true. The slave women who acted as mistresses to the white men were not only the most likely to receive manumission for themselves and/or their children, thus legally bringing them to a closer status with the whites but the high contact they had with whites meant that they were the slaves most likely to emulate white behaviour. These women were the most likely to speak English and dress in a European style. In these ways they appeared more European than African. The white men with whom they formed these relationships often mixed with other white men in the same situation. Therefore, there was a mixing among this groups of slave women and a number of white men. This enabled slave women to build a network of white contacts as well as slave, thus increasing the accessible market for their provision grounds, and domestic skills which again increased their wealth

and position, which in turn allowed them to adopt a more European lifestyle and in so doing separated them further from the slave community. Slave men could gain wealth through selling their services as tradesmen, or produce from their provision ground. This meant they could possibly buy their own manumission. Their inability to form intimate relationships with whites, however, hampered their effort to become assimilated in any way to the wider Creole society as they lacked an opening.

The third hypothesis I proposed was that within the slave community, although there were ways women could gain status, a double domination existed for them. Slave women were also subject to the control of black men. While it is hard to assess accurately the gender dynamics within the slave community due to the nature of the sources, it would seem that women and men were separate but equal within the slave community. Women shared equal responsibility in the economic accumulation of the slave family. They were the principal sellers, while the men were the principal tillers of the grounds. This division of labour was not created so that one of the pair had a lesser status job, but for efficiency of time and resources. The authority in the slave community of matters such as disputes may have come from the elder males within the community, but as bearers of culture and the principle carers of children, women fulfilled an equally vital role within the slave community as men.

The diary of Thomas Thistlewood paints a cameo picture of eighteenth century Jamaican society, and the role and status of slave women within it. It throws new light on many of the historical debates concerning both Jamaican society as a whole, and the dynamics that existed both within and between its two principal communities, as well as issues concerning the role and status of slave women. In order to gain a better understanding of these issues it would be necessary to look in detail at other plantation records, letters and journals from eighteenth century Jamaica to gain a direct comparison and therefore a more accurate assessment of slavery in Jamaica. It may also be

useful to look at the sources about nineteenth century Jamaican slavery, with particular reference to the few slave testimonials which were recorded about this time period. Noting that the ameliorative measures introduced in the nineteenth century with the end of the slave trade meant that the conditions of slavery altered between the two centuries, this would give a longitudinal comparison to enhance the picture. Another way of gaining a greater picture would be to compare the experience of the Jamaican situation to that of one of the other West Indian islands, such as Barbados or Antigua. The availability of plantation records, journals and other material relating to plantation life would be the major stumbling block to further analysis.

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APPENDIX ONETABLE OF THISTLEWOOD'S SEXUAL PARTNERS 1754-1764

<u>NAME</u>	<u>FREQUENCY OF SEXUAL CONTACT</u>
Abba	1
Abigail	6
Amelia	2
Anser	2
Aurelia	9
Baddou	1
Barnett's Nancy	1
Beck	11
Belinda	1
Bella	1
Bessie	1
Betty	1
Big Doll	1
Big Mimer	2
Billy Foots Mimer	1
Celia	2
Chrishea	15
Clara	2
Crawford's Quasheba	1
Cubbah	3
Cynthia	1
Daphne	1
Dawe's Negress	1
Dido	1
Doll	1
Douglas Eve	2
Douglas Hanah	1
Douglas Lettie	1
Egypt Susannah	101
Ellin	25
Esther	1
Eve	17
Fanny	4
Gordon's Polly	3
Hanah	3
Hagar	1
Hayward's Cloe	1
Jenny	13
Juba	1
Juliana	1

Juno	12
Joan	1
Little Doll	47
Little Lydde	5
Little Mimber	47
Little Prue	1
Lydde	3
Margaritta	3
Maria	2
Mary	1
Mazarine	58
Melia	5
Mimme	1
Moll	6
Mould's Lydde	2
Mountain Lucy	20
Mountain Lydde	4
Mountain Susannah	10
Nancy	1
Nanny	2
Nelly	1
Paradise Beneba	1
Pettinne	3
Phibbah	1158
Phillis	5
Phoebe	3
Princess	7
Quasheba	24
Rosanna	22
Rose	7
Sabina	3
Sabrina	1
Solinda	1
Sukey	1
Sylvia	12
Venus	1
Violet	9
Worsoe	9

Also Listed 10 Women as Unknown